FANTASTIC STORY MAGAZINE

ANC

featuring:

THE DARK WORLD
by Henry Kuttner

THE DOUBLE MINDS
by John W. Campbell, Jr.

WINTER 25¢

LOOSE FALSE TEETH?

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Amazing New CREAM Holds Plates Tighter, Longer THAN ANYTHING YOU EVER TRIED

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J. E. SMITH, President
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FANTASTIC STORY MAGAZINE

A THRILLING PUBLICATION

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VOL. 6, No. 3
WINTER ISSUE

A Classic Novel

THE DARK WORLD ..... **HENRY KUTTNER** **10**
The song of a sorceress snared his soul when he came to another world, another self, across vast stretches of space and time!

A Classic Novelet

THE DOUBLE MINDS ..... **JOHN W. CAMPBELL, JR.** **76**
It is never advisable to underestimate the power of a Terran, especially when the Terran actually sets his mind to working!

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It was disaster for humans and a thing of beauty to the Meffids

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The old man was playing his cat and mouse game . . . from the grave!

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HAVE YOU HEARD—? ..... **DIXON WELLS** **9**
A page of facts, ideas and information from the science front

Cover Painting by ALEX EBEL

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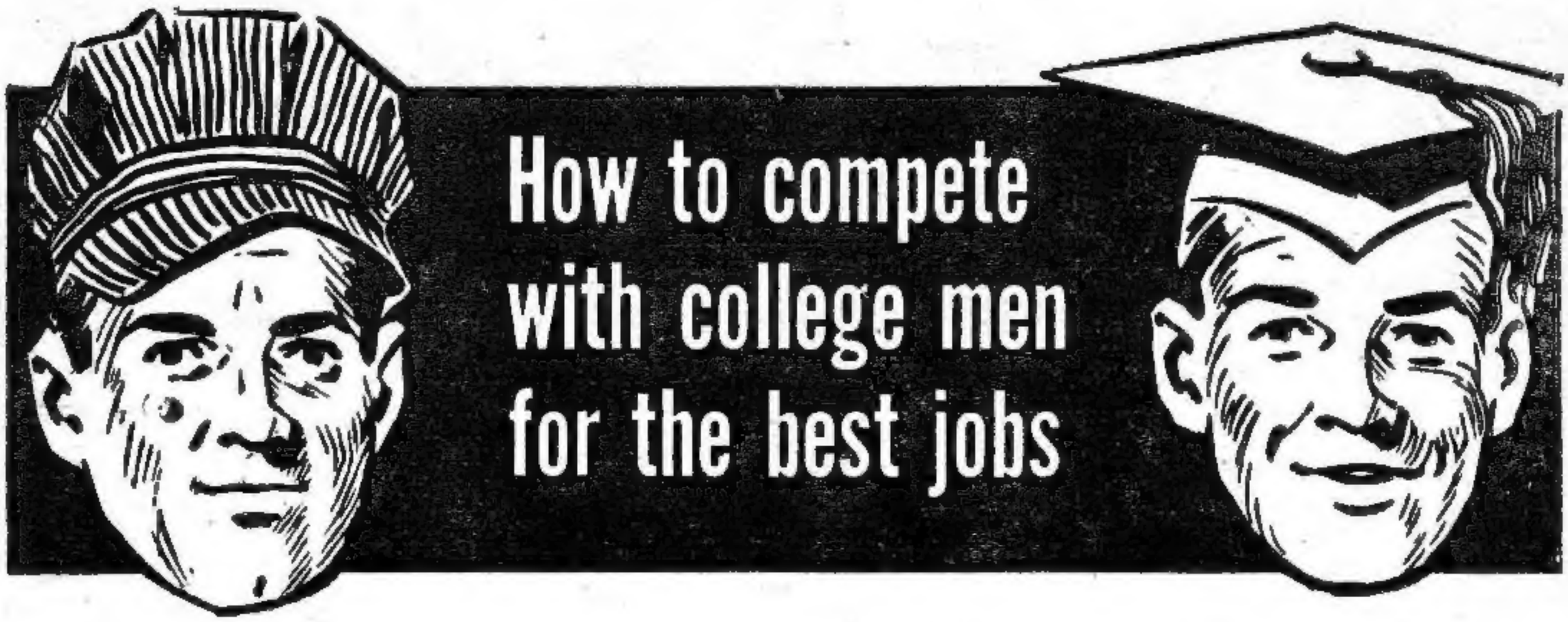
N. L. PINES, *Publisher;* FANNY ELLSWORTH, *Executive Editor*
ED ROFHEART, *Art Director;* SAMUEL MINES, *Editor*

FANTASTIC STORY MAGAZINE published quarterly and copyright 1953 by Best Books, Inc., 1125 E. Vaile Ave., Kokomo, Ind. Editorial and executive offices, 10 East 40th Street, New York 16, N. Y. Subscription: (12 issues), $3.00; single copies, $.25; foreign postage extra. Entered as second class matter at the post office at Kokomo, Ind. Material is submitted at risk of the sender and must be accompanied by self-addressed, stamped envelopes. All characters in stories and semi-fiction articles are fictitious. If the name of any living person or existing institution is used, it is a coincidence. Winter, 1954. Printed in the U.S.A.



You can break through the education barrier that bars you from top-salary jobs. You can climb as fast and as far as any college man. Whether your field of interest is engineering, business management or industrial supervision, you can hurdle your education handicaps. How? Listen . . .

AVOID THIS COMMON ERROR Why do men spend four years at college? To get a good job when they get out. And many of them stop right there. They get their good job and relax. A college education is a fine thing. But it's not a free ticket to automatic prosperity.

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YEAR OF THE SIX MILLIONTH STUDENT

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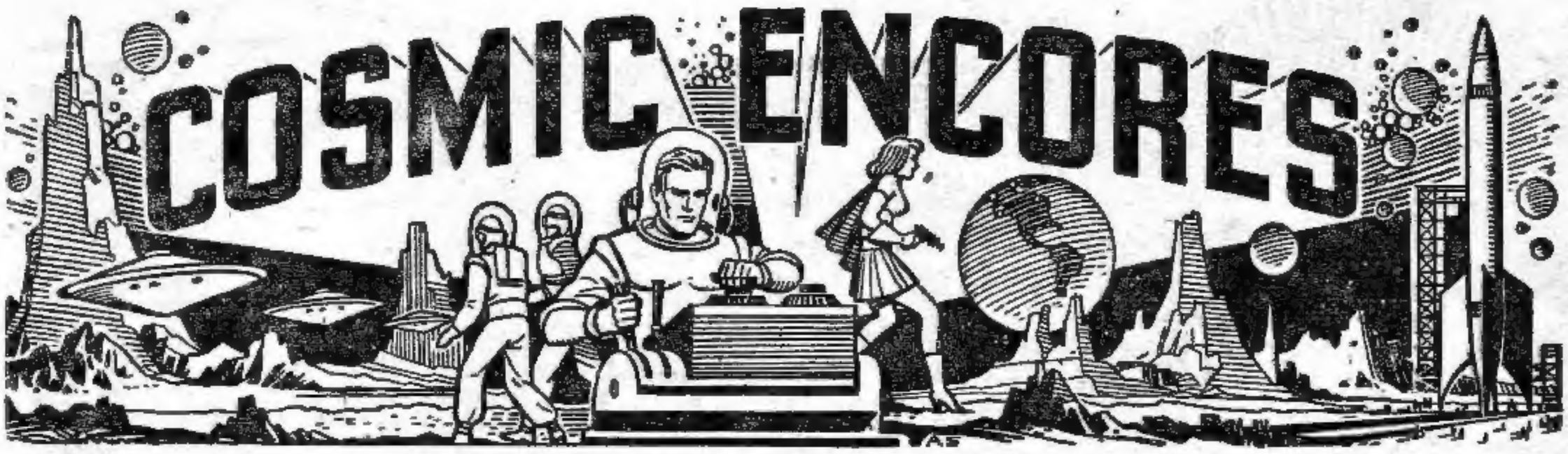

A DEPARTMENT WHERE SCIENCE-FICTION READERS AND THE EDITOR MEET

SOME months back there was a rather lively discussion in these columns about weather cycles and almost everybody managed to get into the act. It proves what Mark Twain once said: "Everybody talks about the weather, but nobody does anything about it." Even the cloud-seeding experiments are now in disrepute, with government experts beginning to believe they may result in less rain over a long period rather than more.

Now comes a new voice in the discussion—Dr. F. Bartlett of the Bartlett Tree Expert Co. This organization is a luxury-type outfit, playing surgeon to ailing trees on the grounds of those citizens rich enough to own grounds. In the course of much clambering about in their patients, the tree experts have amassed some knowledge about trees and also some theories.

The weather is getting warmer, says Dr. Bartlett, because we are cutting down more trees than we are replacing. Millions of trees have been cut down, not only for lumber, but to make room for housing developments, the growth of towns and so on. In such suburban areas as those around New York City the woods are disappearing at an amazing rate as bull-dozers go in and houses go up. The result, Dr. Bartlett thinks, is a small but definite increase in the percentage of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere. Carbon dioxide is created, not only by the breathing process of animal life, but by combustion and thus pours out of chimneys of homes and factories. Carbon monoxide comes out of car exhausts and eventually is transformed into dioxide.

Trees absorb carbon dioxide; and as a by-product of photosynthesis, the process by which they manufacture starch out of carbon dioxide, water and sunlight, they release oxygen in sufficient quantity to balance animal life. With trees being cut so rapidly, less carbon dioxide is being absorbed. According to Bartlett there are now 33 parts of carbon dioxide per 1000 parts of air, as contrasted with 30 parts per 1000 a hundred years ago. This, he believes, is enough to make a noticeable change for the warmer in our weather—both summer and winter.

This is an intriguing theory and if true should not only give some science fiction authors an idea for a story, but add another argument for planting trees. Personally we are in favor of planting trees because we like trees, but if there is a better reason, like our breathing, it becomes even more important. And think of the science fiction applications. Anybody know anything about this theory of the more carbon dioxide the warmer?

LETTERS FROM OUR READERS

WE HAVE come to the conclusion that the most fantastic thing about this magazine is not the stories but the letters—or maybe the letter writers. For further evidence, carry on.

SHOCKPROOF
by Dick Clarkson

Dear Sam: Tell me, do you or your tall assistant ever notice whether or not you drip green while hanging from the ceiling?

I have glad tidings of great joy for you this time, Sam . . . you told me to go back to Harvard so they could finish studying me. Well, there is some cliché about throwing stones, only I was in a glass bottle instead of a house. There weren't any stones handy to throw, so instead I threw a tantrum and it broke the bottle into leetle pieces; thus, I escaped. So they ask me will I come back another year and I said yes I would if they'd raise my salary. That was a mistake, since they did and now it costs $200 more to go there. Someday I shall get over my extremely bad case of hoof-in-mouth disease. But at least I'll have a new bottle; this time I told them to make sure it was full.

(Continued on page 121)

KNOWLEDGE
THAT HAS
ENDURED WITH THE
PYRAMIDS

A SECRET METHOD FOR THE MASTERY OF LIFE

WHENCE came the knowledge that built the Pyramids and the mighty Temples of the Pharaohs? Civilization began in the Nile Valley centuries ago. Where did its first builders acquire their astounding wisdom that started man on his upward climb? Beginning with naught they overcame nature's forces and gave the world its first sciences and arts. Did their knowledge come from a race now submerged beneath the sea, or were they touched with Infinite inspiration? From what concealed source came the wisdom that produced such characters as Amenhotep IV, Leonardo da Vinci, Isaac Newton, and a host of others?

Today it is known that they discovered and learned to interpret certain *Secret Methods* for the development of their inner power of mind. They learned to command the inner forces within their own beings, and to master life. This secret art of living has been preserved and handed down throughout the ages. Today it is extended to those who dare to use its profound principles to meet and solve the problems of life in these complex times.

AMENHOTEP IV
Founder of Egypt's
Mystery Schools

This Sealed Book—FREE

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HAVE YOU HEARD—?

A Page of News from the Science Front

ARE YOU PUZZLED by food poisoning which hits some members of a family and not others, though all ate the same thing? Doctors Berry and Mitchell have done some experimental work which suggests that a change in the citric acid cycle of the body is an important factor. Mice which had this cycle blocked by injection of a chemical were found much more vulnerable to the germ *Salmonella typhimurium*—a bug which hits both mice and men.

THE ATOM HAS ABOUT AS MUCH privacy as a strip-teaser these days. From Brookhaven Labs comes word that another of the infinitesimal particles comprising matter has had its wraps removed. Operating at an energy of 2.2 billion electron volts, the Cosmotron revealed tiny vapor trails which indicated the existence of a "neutral V-particle" a bit of matter previously found in cosmic rays, but never before created by man's own energy.

THE RARE AND VALUABLE element selenium has been found in a weed considered a pest in our western states—the loco weed. The plant, disliked for its effect upon livestock, may now become valuable enough to raise on a large scale. It has the faculty of absorbing selenium from the soil and concentrating it in its own cells. Soil which contains 0.005% selenium will grow loco weeds containing 1.5% of the chemical and this concentration is enough to make their cultivation feasible. Selenium is important in the electronics, petroleum and rubber industries.

PEOPLE WITH HEART DISEASE are helped by having their rooms air-conditioned during the hot months, according to the AMA. Though it is common belief that cardiac patients do better in warm climates there is a limit to this kind of aid, reached when the temperature and humidity become excessive. When that happens the body tries to cool itself by increased flow of blood through the skin and this makes the heart work harder. Rest in bed in a comfortably air-conditioned room produces the easiest set of conditions for the heart.

THERE ARE THREE KINDS OF H-bombs possible and the big puzzle now is, which of them do we have and which do the Russians have? Of hydrogen itself there is the common ordinary kind present in our atmosphere, there is deuterium or "heavy" hydrogen, much rarer and there is tritium, the triple weight hydrogen which is manufactured and is radioactive. Best guess is that tritium is the favored type.

WEIGHTLESSNESS SEEMS TO offer no problem for space flight, according to the latest experiments at the Air Force School of Aviation Medicine at Randolph Field, Texas. Mice sent up in jet planes experienced a weightless condition for about 42 seconds. Though it disturbed them and made them reach desperately for some kind of support, it produced no harmful results that could be ascertained. Though the tests are not conclusive, there is reason to believe humans would be affected in much the same way.

THE AGE OF THE EARTH is being looked into with the aid of a lead compound related to the tetraethyl lead used in high test gasoline. It is an isotope of lead and a product of the radioactive aging of uranium. Its condition therefore indicates the age at which it is formed. This new information shows that the earliest period at which these elements could have been formed was 5,500,000,000 years ago. The earth's crust is believed to be 3,500,000,000 years old. —*Dixon Wells*

The Dark World

A Novel by HENRY KUTTNER

I

TO the north thin smoke made a column against the darkening sky. Again I felt the unreasoning fear, the impulse toward nightmare flight that had been with me for a long time now. I knew it was without reason. There was only smoke, rising from the swamps of the tangled Limberlost country, not fifty miles from Chicago, where man has outlawed superstition with strong bonds of steel and concrete.

I knew it was only a camper's fire, yet *I knew it was not.* Something, far back in my mind, knew what the smoke rose

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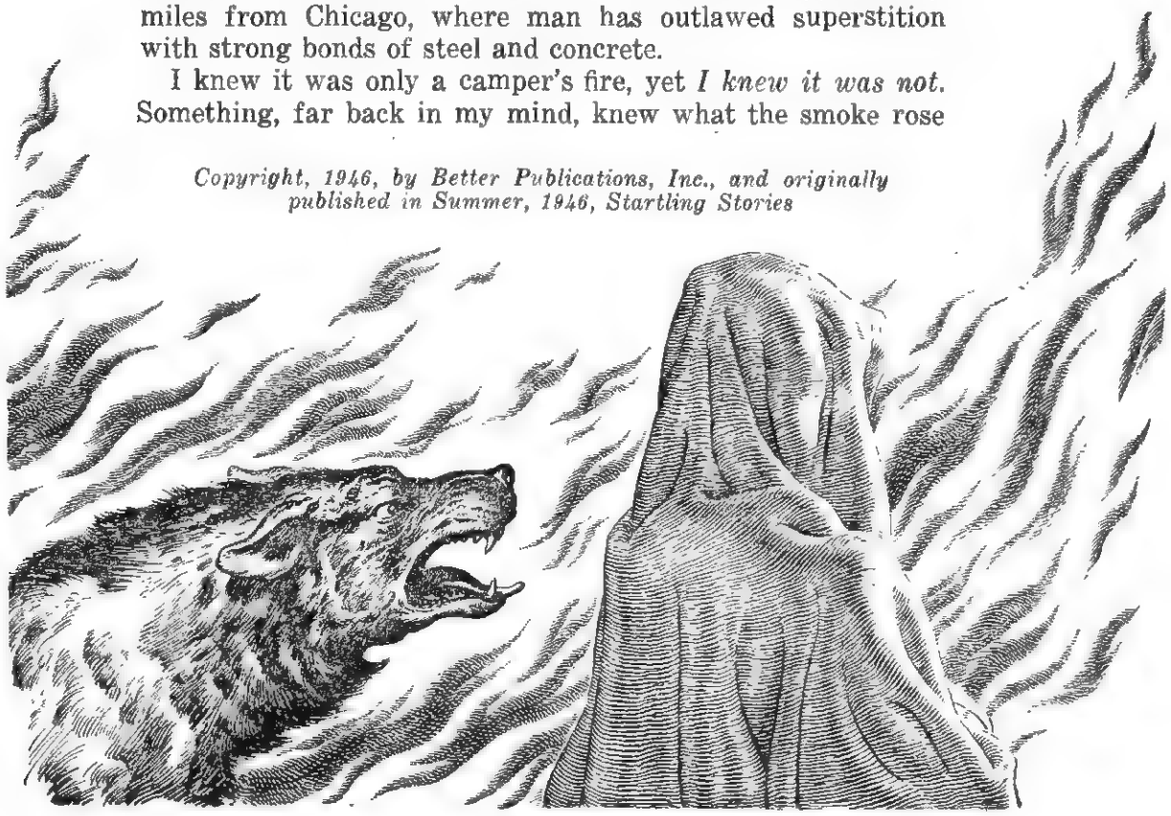

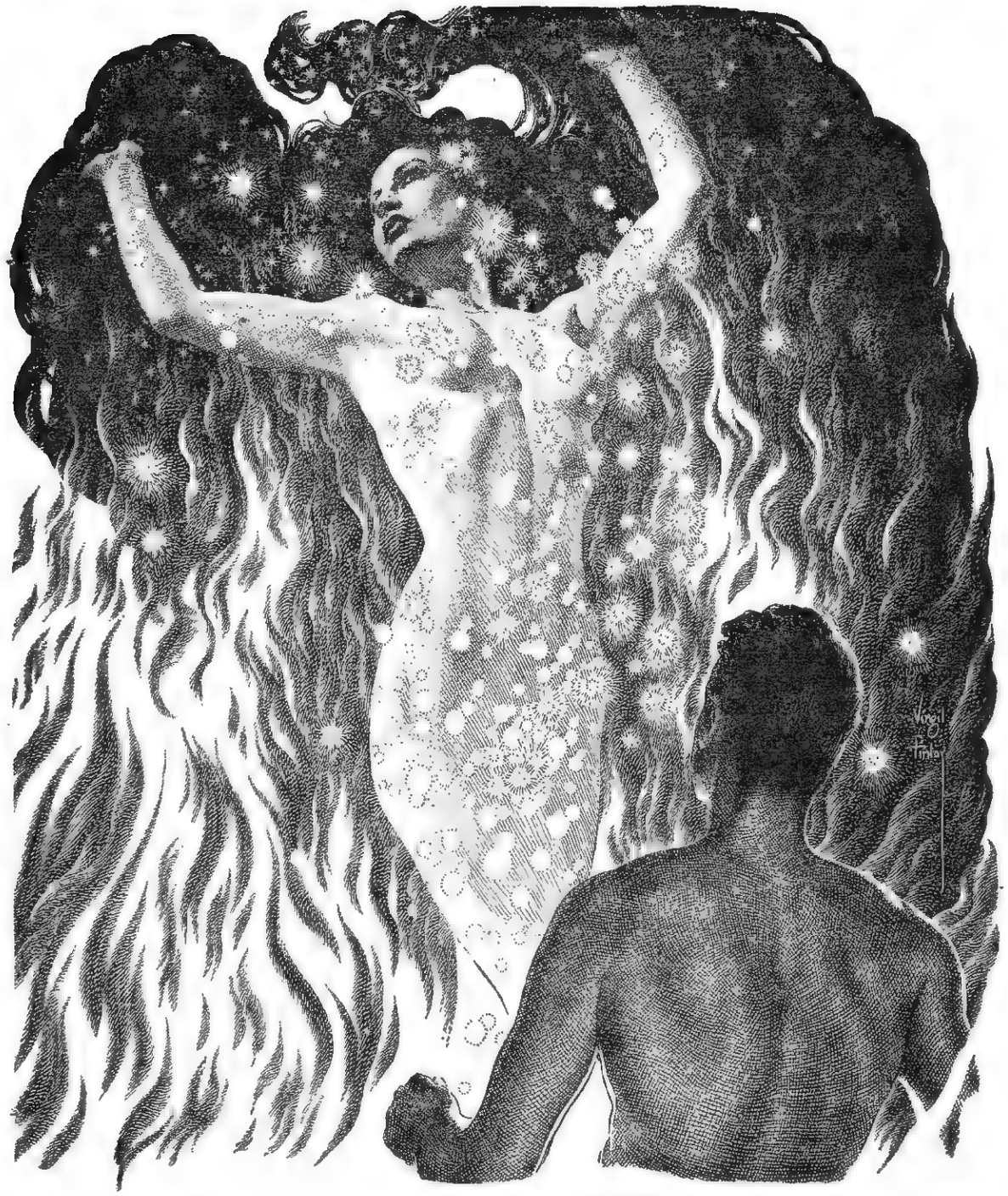

Illustrated by VIRGIL FINLAY

The song of a sorceress snared his soul when he came to another world, another self, across space and time. . . .

Illustrated by VIRGIL FINLAY

The saga of a sorceress scarred his soul when he came to another world, another self, across space and time . . .

from, and who stood about the fire, peering my way through the trees.

I looked away, my glance slipping around the crowded walls—shelves bearing the random fruit of my uncle's magpie collector's instinct. Opium pipes of inlaid work and silver, golden chessmen from India, a sword. . . .

Deep memories stirred within me—deep panic. I was beneath the sword in two strides, tearing it from the wall, my fingers cramping hard around the hilt. Not fully aware of what I did, I found myself facing the window and the distant smoke again. The sword was in my fist, but feeling wrong, not reassuring, not as *the* sword ought to feel.

"Easy, Ed," my uncle's deep voice said behind me. "What's the matter? You look—sort of wild."

"It's the wrong sword," I heard myself saying helplessly.

Then something like a mist cleared from my brain. I blinked at him stupidly, wondering what was happening to me. My voice answered.

"It isn't the sword. It should have come from Cambodia. It should have been one of the three talismans of the Fire King and the Water King. Three very great talismans— the fruit of *cui*, gathered at the time of the deluge, but still fresh—the rattan with flowers that never fade, and the sword of Yan, the guarding spirit."

My uncle squinted at me through pipesmoke. He shook his head.

"You've changed, Ed," he said in his deep, gentle voice. "You've changed a lot. I suppose because of the war—it's to be expected. And you've been sick. But you never used to be interested in things like that before. I think you spend too much time at the libraries. I'd hoped this vacation would help. The rest—"

"I don't want rest!" I said violently. "I spent a year and a half resting in Sumatra. Doing nothing but rest in that smelly little jungle village, waiting and waiting and waiting."

I could see and smell it now. I could feel again the fever that had raged so long through me as I lay in the tabooed hut. . . .

MY mind went back eighteen months to the last hour when things were normal for me. It was in the closing phases of World War II, and I was flying over the Sumatran jungle. War, of course, is never good or normal, but until that one blinding moment in the air I had been an ordinary man, sure of myself, sure of my place in the world, with no nagging fragments of memory too elusive to catch.

Then everything blanked out, suddenly and completely. I never knew what it was. There was nothing it could have been. My only injuries came when the plane struck, and they were miraculously light. But I had been whole and unhurt when the blindness and blankness came over me.

The friendly Bataks found me as I lay in the ruined plane. They brought me through a fever and a raging illness with their strange, crude, effective ways of healing, but I sometimes thought they had done me no service when they saved me. And their witch-doctor had his doubts, too.

He knew something. He worked his curious, futile charms with knotted strings and rice, sweating with effort I did not understand—then. I remembered the scarred, ugly mask looming out of the shadow, the hands moving in gestures of strange power.

"Come back, oh soul, where thou are lingering in the wood, or in the hills, or by the river. See, I call thee with a *toemba bras*, with an egg of the fowl Rajah *moelija*, with the eleven healing leaves. . . ."

Yes, they were sorry for me at first, all of them. The witch-doctor was the first to sense something wrong, and the awareness spread. I could feel it spreading, as their attitude changed. They were afraid. Not of me, I thought, but of—of what?

Before the helicopter came to take me back to civilization, the witch-doctor

told me a little. As much, perhaps, as he dared.

"You must hide, my son. All your life you must hide. Something is searching for you—" he used a word I did not understand—" and it has come from the Other World, the ghostlands, to hunt you down. Remember this: all magic things must be taboo to you. And if that too fails, perhaps you may find a weapon in magic. But we cannot help you. Our powers are not strong enough for that."

He was glad to see me go.

And after that, unrest. For something had changed me utterly. The fever? Perhaps. At any rate, I didn't feel like the same man. There were dreams, memories—haunting urgencies as if I had somehow, somewhere left some vital job unfinished. . . .

I found myself talking more freely to my uncle.

"It was like a curtain lifting. A curtain of gauze. I saw some things more clearly—they seemed to have a different significance. Things happen to me now that would have seemed incredible—before. Now they don't.

"I've traveled a lot, you know. It doesn't help. There's always something to remind me. An amulet in a pawnshop window, a knotted string, a cat's-eye opal and two figures. I see them in my dreams, over and over. And once—"

I stopped.

"Yes?" my uncle prompted softly.

"It was in New Orleans. I woke up one night and there was something in my room, very close to me. I had a gun—a special sort of gun—under my pillow. When I reached for it the—call it a dog—sprang from the window. Only it wasn't shaped quite like a dog." I hesitated. "There were silver bullets in the revolver," I said.

My uncle was silent for a long moment. I knew what he was thinking.

"The other figure?" he said finally.

"I don't know. He wears a hood. I think it's very old. And beyond these two—"

"Yes?"

"A voice. A very sweet voice, haunting. A fire. And beyond the fire, a face I have never seen clearly."

MY uncle nodded. The darkness had drawn in; I could scarcely see him, and the smoke outside had lost itself against the shadow of night. But a faint glow still lingered beyond the trees . . . Or did I only imagine that?

I nodded toward the window.

"I've seen that fire before," I told him.

"What's wrong with it? Campers make fires."

"No. It's a Need-fire."

"What the devil is that?"

"It's a ritual," I said. "Like the Midsummer fires, or the Beltane fire the Scots used to kindle. But the Need-fire is lighted only in time of calamity. It's a very old custom."

My uncle laid down his pipe and leaned forward.

"What is it, Ed? Do you have any inkling at all?"

"Psychologically I suppose you could call it a persecution complex," I said slowly. "I—believe in things I never used to. I think someone is trying to find me *has* found me. And is calling. Who it is I don't know. What they want I don't know. But a little while ago I found out one more thing—this sword."

I picked the sword up from the table.

"It isn't what I want," I went on, "But sometimes, when my mind is—abstract, something from outside floats into it. Like the need for a sword. And not any sword—just one. I don't know what the sword looks like, but I'd know if I held it in my hand." I laughed a little. "And if I drew it a few inches from the sheath, I could put out that fire up there as if I'd blown on it like a candle-flame. And if I drew the sword all the way out—the world would come to an end!"

My uncle nodded. After a moment, he spoke.

"The doctors," he asked. "What do they say?"

"I know what they would say, if I told them," I said grimly. "Pure insanity. If I could be sure of that, I'd feel happier. One of the dogs was killed last night, you know."

"Of course. Old Duke. Another dog from some farm, eh?"

"Or a wolf. The same wolf that got into my room last night, and stood over me like a man, and clipped off a lock of my hair."

Something flamed up far away, beyond the window, and was gone in the dark. The Need-fire.

My uncle rose and stood looking down at me in the dimness. He laid a big hand on my shoulder.

"I think you're sick, Ed."

"You think I'm crazy. Well, I may be. But I've got a hunch I'm going to know soon, one way or the other."

I picked up the sheathed sword and laid it across my knees. We sat in silence for what seemed like a long time.

In the forest to the north, the Need-fire burned steadily. I could not see it. But its flames stirred in my blood—dangerously—darkly.

II

I could not sleep. The suffocating breathlessness of late summer lay like a woollen blanket over me. Presently I went into the big room and restlessly searched for cigarettes. My uncle's voice came through an open doorway.

"All right, Ed?"

"Yeah. I can't sleep yet. Maybe I'll read."

I chose a book at random, sank into a relaxer chair, and switched on a lamp. It was utterly silent. I could not even hear the faint splashing of little waves on the lakeshore.

There was something I wanted. . . .

A trained rifleman's hand, at need, will itch for the familiar feeling of smooth wood and metal. Similarly, my hand was hungry for the feel of something—neither gun nor sword, I thought. A weapon that I had used before. I could not remember what it was. Once I glanced at the poker leaning against the fireplace, and thought that was it; but the flash of recognition was gone instantly.

The book was a popular novel. I skimmed through it rapidly. The dim, faint, pulsing in my blood did not wane. It grew stronger, rising from sub-sensory levels. A distant excitement seemed to be growing deep in my mind.

Grimacing, I rose to return the book to its shelf. I stood there for a moment, my glance skimming over the titles. On impulse I drew out a volume I had not looked at for many years, the Book of Common Prayer.

It fell open in my hands. A sentence blazed out from the page.

I am become as it were a monster unto many.

I put back the book and returned to my chair. I was in no mood for reading. The lamp overhead bothered me, and I pressed the switch. Instantly moonlight flooded the room—and instantly the curious sense of expectancy was heightened, as though I had lowered a—a barrier.

The sheathed sword still lay on the window-seat. I looked past it, to the clouded sky where a golden moon shone. Faint, far away, a glimmer showed—the Need-fire, blazing in the swampy wilderness of the Limberlost.

And it called.

The gold square of window was hypnotic. I lay back in my chair, half-closing my eyes, while the sense of danger moved coldly within my brain. Sometimes before I had felt this call, summoning me. And always before I had been able to resist.

This time I wavered.

The lock of hair clipped from my head—had that given the enemy power? Superstition. My logic called it that, but a deep, inner well of conviction told me that the ancient hair-magic was not merely mummery. Since that time in Sumatra I had been far less skeptical. And since then I had studied.

The studies were strange enough, ranging from the principles of sympathetic magic to the wild fables of lycanthropy and demonology. Yet I was amazingly quick at learning.

IT was as though I took a refresher course, to remind myself of knowledge I had once known by heart. Only one subject really troubled me, and I continually stumbled across it by roundabout references.

And that was the Force, the entity, disguised in folklore under such familiar names as the Black Man, Satan, Lucifer, and such unfamiliar names as Kutchie, of the Australian Dieris, Tuna, of the Esquimaux, the African Abonsam, and the Swiss Strätteli.

I did no research on the Black Man—I did not need to. There was a recurrent dream that I could not help identifying with the dark force that represented evil. I would be standing before a golden square of light, very much afraid, and yet straining toward some consummation that I desired. And deep down within that glowing square there would be the beginning of motion. I knew there were certain ritual gestures to be made before the ceremony could be begun, but it was difficult to break the paralysis that held me.

A square like the moon-drenched window before me—yet not the same.

For no chill essence of fear thrust itself out at me now. Rather, the low humming I heard was soothing, gentle as a woman's crooning voice.

The gold square wavered—shook—and little tendrils of crepuscular light fingered out toward me. Ever the low humming came, alluring and disarming.

Golden fingers — tentacles — they darted here and there as if puzzled. They touched lamp, table, carpet and drew back. They—touched me.

Swiftly they leaped forward now—avid! I had time for a momentary pulse of alarm before they wrapped me in an embrace like golden sands of sleep. The humming grew louder. And I responded to it.

As the skin of the flayed satyr Marsyas thrilled at the sound of his native Phrygian melodies! I knew this music. I knew this—chant!

Stole through the golden glow a crouching shadow—not human—with amber eyes and a bristling mane—the shadow of a wolf.

It hesitated, glanced over its shoulder questioningly. And now another shape swam into view, cowled and gowned so that nothing of its face or body showed. But it was small—small as a child. . . .

WOLF and cowled figure hung in the golden mists, watching and waiting. The sighing murmur altered. Formed itself into syllables and words. Words in no human tongue, but—I knew them.

"Ganelon! I call you, Ganelon! By the seal in your blood—hear me!"

Ganelon! Surely that was my name. I knew it so well.

Yet who called me thus?

"I have called you before, but the way was not open. Now the bridge is made. Come to me, Ganelon!"

A sigh.

The wolf glanced over a bristling shoulder, snarling. The cowled figure bent toward me. I sensed keen eyes searching me from the darkness of the hood, and an icy breath touched me.

"He has forgotten, Medea," said a sweet, high-pitched voice, like the tone of a child.

Again the sigh. "Has he forgotten me? Ganelon, Ganelon! Have you forgotten the arms of Medea, the lips of Medea?"

I swung, cradled in the golden mists, half asleep.

"He has forgotten," the cowled figure said.

"Then let him come to me nevertheless. Ganelon! The Need-fire burns. The gateway lies open to the Dark World. By fire and earth, air and darkness, I

summon you! Ganelon!"

"He has forgotten."

"Bring him. We have the power, now."

The golden sands thickened. Flame-eyed wolf and robed figure swam toward me. I felt myself lifted—moving forward, not of my own volition.

The window swung wide. I saw the sword, sheathed and ready. I snatched up the weapon, but I could not resist that relentless tide that carried me forward. Wolf and whispering shadow drifted with me.

"To the Fire. Bring him to the Fire."

"He has forgotten, Medea."

"To the Fire, Edeyrn. To the Fire."

Twisted tree-limbs floated past me. Far ahead I saw a flicker. It grew larger, nearer. It was the Need-fire.

Faster the tide bore me. Toward the fire itself—

Not to Caer Llyr!

From the depths of my mind the cryptic words spewed. Amber-eyed wolf whirled to glare at me; cowled shadow swept in closer on the golden stream. I felt a chill of deadly cold drive through the curling mists.

"Caer Llyr," the cloaked Edeyrn whispered in the child's sweet voice. "He remembers Caer Llyr—but does he remember Llyr?"

"He will remember! He has been sealed to Llyr. And, in Caer Llyr, the Place of Llyr, he will remember."

The Need-fire was a towering pillar a few yards away. I fought against the dragging tide.

I lifted my sword—threw the sheath away. I cut at the golden mists that fettered me.

Under the ancient steel the shining fog-wraiths shuddered and were torn apart—and drew back. There was a break in the humming harmony; for an instant, utter silence.

Then—

"Matholch!" the invisible whisperer cried. "Lord Matholch!"

The wolf crouched, fangs bared. I aimed a cut at its snarling mask. It avoided the blow easily and sprang.

It caught the blade between its teeth and wrenched the hilt from my grip.

The golden fogs surged back, folding me in their warm embrace.

"Caer Llyr," they murmured.

The Need-fire roared up in a scarlet fountain.

"Caer Llyr!" the flames shouted.

And out of those flames rose—a woman!

HAIR dark as midnight fell softly to her knees. Under level brows she flashed one glance at me, a glance that held question and a fierce determination. She was loveliness incarnate. Dark loveliness.

Lilith. Medea, witch of Colchis!

And—

"The gateway closes," the child-voice of Edeyrn said.

The wolf, still mouthing my sword, crouched uneasily. But the woman of the fire said no word.

She held out her arms to me.

The gold clouds thrust me forward, into those white arms.

Wolf and cowled shadow sprang to flank us. The humming rose to a deep-pitched roar—a thunder as of crashing worlds.

"It is difficult, difficult," Medea said. "Help me, Edeyrn. Lord Matholch."

The fires died. Around us was not the moonlit wilderness of the Limberlost, but empty grayness, a featureless grayness that stretched to infinity. Not even stars showed against that blank.

And now there was fear in the voice of Edeyrn.

"Medea. I have not the—power, I stayed too long in the Earth-world."

"Open the gate!" Medea cried. "Thrust it open but a little way, or we stay here between the worlds forever!"

The wolf crouched, snarling. I felt energy pouring out of his beast-body. His brain that was not the brain of a beast.

Around us the golden clouds were dissipating.

The grayness stole in.

"In my dreams I brought back the old days. . . ."

"Ganelon," Medea said. "Ganelon! Help me!"

A door in my mind opened. A formless darkness stole in.

I felt that deadly, evil shadow creep through me, and submerge my mind under ebon waves.

"He has the power," Edeyrn murmured. "He was sealed to Llyr. Let him call on—Llyr."

"No. No. I dare not. Llyr!" But Medea's face was turned to me questioningly.

At my feet the wolf snarled and strained, as though by sheer brute strength it might wrench open a gateway between locked worlds.

Now the black sea submerged me utterly. My thought reached out and was repulsed by the dark horror of sheer infinity, stretched forth again and—

Touched—something!

Llyr . . . *Llyr!*

"The gateway opens," Edeyrn said.

The gray emptiness was gone. Golden clouds thinned and vanished. Around me, white pillars rose to a vault far, far above. We stood on a raised dais upon which curious designs were emblazoned.

The tide of evil which had flowed through had vanished.

But, sick with horror and self-loathing, I dropped to my knees, one arm shielding my eyes.

I had called on—*Llyr!*

III

ACHING in every muscle, I woke and lay motionless. staring at the low ceiling. Memory flooded back. I turned my head, realizing that I lay on a soft couch padded with silks and pillows. Across the bare, simply furnished room was a recessed window, translucent, for it admitted light, but I could see only vague blurs through it.

Seated beside me, on a three-legged stool, was the dwarfed, robed figure I knew was Edeyrn.

Not even now could I see the face; the shadows within the cowl were too deep. I felt the keen glint of a watchful gaze, though, and a breath of something unfamiliar—cold and deadly. The robes were saffron, an ugly hue that held nothing of life in the harsh folds. Staring, I saw that the creature was less than four feet tall, or would have been had it stood upright.

Again I heard that sweet, childish, sexless voice.

"Will you drink, Lord Ganelon? Or eat?"

I threw back the gossamer robe covering me and sat up. I was wearing a thin tunic of silvery softness, and trunks of the same material. Edeyrn apparently had not moved, but a drapery swung apart in the wall, and a man came silently in, bearing a covered tray.

Sight of him was reassuring. He was a big man, sturdily muscled, and under a plumed Etruscan-styled helmet his face was tanned and strong. I thought so till I met his eyes. They were blue pools in which horror had drowned. An ancient fear, so familiar that it was almost submerged, lay deep in his gaze.

Silently he served me and in silence withdrew.

Edeyrn nodded toward the tray.

"Eat and drink. You will be stronger, Lord Ganelon."

THERE were meats and bread, of a sort, and a glass of colorless liquid that was not water, as I found on sampling it. I took a sip, set down the chalice, and scowled at Edeyrn.

"I gather that I'm not insane," I said.

"You are not. Your soul has been elsewhere—*you* have been in exile—but you are home again now."

"In Caer Llyr" I asked, without quite knowing why.

Edeyrn shook the saffron robes.

"No. But you must remember?"

"I remember nothing. Who are you? What's happened to me?"

"You know that you are Ganelon?"

"My name's Edward Bond."

"Yet you almost remembered—at the Need-fire," Edeyrn said. "This will take

time. And there is danger always. Who am I? I am Edeyrn—who serves the Coven."

"Are you—"

"A woman," she said, in that childish, sweet voice, laughing a little. "A very old woman, the oldest of the Coven now, except for one. And as for the Coven, it has shrunk from its original thirteen. There is Medea, of course, Lord Matholch—" I remembered the wolf—"Ghast Rhymi, who has more power than any of us, but is too old to use it. And you, Lord Ganelon, or Edward Bond, as you name yourself. Five of us in all now. Once there were hundreds, but even I cannot remember that time, though Ghast Rhymi can, if he would."

I put my head in my hands.

"Good heavens, I don't know! Your words mean nothing to me. I don't even know where I am!"

"Listen," she said, and I felt a soft touch on my shoulder. "You must understand this. You have lost your memories."

"That's not true."

"It *is* true, Lord Ganelon. Your true memories were erased, and you were given artificial ones. All you think you recall now, of your life on the Earth-world—all that is false. It did not happen. At least, not to you."

"The Earth-world? I'm not on Earth?"

"This is a different world," she said. "But it is your own world. You came from here originally. The Rebels, our enemies, exiled you and changed your memories."

"That's impossible."

"Come here," Edeyrn said, and went to the window. She touched something, and the pane grew transparent. I looked over her shrouded head at a landscape I had never seen before.

Or had I?

UNDER a dull, crimson sun the rolling forest below lay bathed in bloody light. I was looking down from a considerable height, and could not make out details, but it seemed to me that the trees were oddly shaped and that they were moving. A river ran toward distant hills. A few white towers rose from the forest. That was all. Yet the scarlet, huge sun had told me enough. This was not the Earth I knew.

"Another planet?"

"More than that," she said. "Few in the Dark World know this. But *I* know—and there are some others who have learned, unluckily for you. There are worlds of probability, divergent in the stream of time, but identical almost, until the branches diverge too far."

"I don't understand that."

"Worlds co-existent in time and space—but separated by another dimension, the variant of probability. This is the world that might have been yours had *something* not happened, long ago. Originally the Dark World and the Earth-world were one, in space and time. Then a decision was made—a very vital decision, though I am not sure what it was. From that point the time-stream branched, and two variant worlds existed where there had been only one before.

"They were utterly identical at first, except that in one of them the key decision had *not* been made. The results were very different. It happened hundreds of years ago, but the two variant worlds are still close together in the time stream. Eventually they will drift farther apart, and grow less like each other. Meanwhile they *are* similar, so much so that a man on the Earth-world may have his twin in the Dark World."

"His twin?"

"The man he might have been, had the key decision not been made ages ago in his world. Yes, twins, Ganelon—Edward Bond. Do you understand now?"

I returned to the couch and sat there, frowning.

"Two worlds, co-existent. I can understand that, yes. But I think you mean more—that a double for me exists somewhere."

"You were born in the Dark World.

Your double, the true Edward Bond, was born on Earth. But we have enemies here, woodsrunners, rebels, and they have stolen enough knowledge to bridge the gulf between time-variants. We our selves learned the method only lately, though once it was well-known here, among the Coven.

"The rebels reached out across the gulf and sent you—sent Ganelon—into the Earth-world, so that Edward Bond could come here, among them. They—"

"But why?" I interrupted. "What reason could they have for that?"

Edeyrn turned her hooded head toward me, and I felt, not for the first time, a strange, remote chill as she fixed her unseen gaze upon my face.

"What reason?" she echoed in her sweet, cool voice. "Think, Ganelon. See if you remember."

I thought. I closed my eyes and tried to submerge my conscious mind, to let the memories of Ganelon rise up to the surface if they were there at all. I could not yet accept this preposterous thought in its entirety, but certainly it would explain a great deal if it were true. It would even explain—I realized suddenly—that strange blanking out in the plane over the Sumatra jungle, that moment from which everything had seemed so wrong.

PERHAPS that was the moment when Edward Bond left Earth, and Ganelon took his place—both twins too stunned and helpless at the change to know what had happened, or to understand.

But this was impossible!

"I don't remember!" I said harshly. "It can't have happened. I *know* who I am! I know everything that ever happened to Edward Bond. You can't tell me that all that is only illusion. It's too clear, too real!"

"Ganelon, Ganelon," Edeyrn crooned to me, a smile in her voice. "Think of the rebel tribes. Try, Ganelon. Try to remember why they did what they did to you. The woodsrunners, Ganelon—the disobedient little men in green. The hateful men who threatened us. Ganelon, surely you remember!"

It may have been a form of hypnotism. I thought of that later. But at that moment, a picture did swim into my mind. I could see the green-clad swarms moving through the woods, and the sight of them made me hot with sudden anger. For that instant I was Ganelon, and a great and powerful lord, defied by these underlings not fit to tie my shoe.

"Of course you hated them," murmured Edeyrn. She may have seen the look on my face. I felt the stiffness of an unfamiliar twist of feature as she spoke. I had straightened where I sat, and my shoulders had gone back arrogantly, my lip curling in a feeling of scorn. So perhaps she did not read my mind at all. What I thought was plain in my face and bearing.

"Of course you punished them when you could," she went on. "It was your right and duty. But they duped you, Ganelon. They were cleverer than you. They found a door that would turn on a temporal axis and thrust you into another world. On the far side of the door was Edward Bond who did not hate them. So they opened the door."

Edeyrn's voice rose slightly and in it I detected a note of mockery.

"False memories, false memories, Ganelon. You put on Edward Bond's past when you put on his identity. But he came into our world as he was, free of any knowledge of Ganelon. He has given us much trouble, my friend, and much bewilderment. At first we did not guess what had gone wrong. It seemed to us that as Ganelon vanished from our Coven, a strange new Ganelon appeared among the rebels, organizing them to fight against his own people." She laughed softly. "We had to rouse Ghast Rhymi from his sleep to aid us. But in the end, learning the method of door-opening, we came to Earth and searched for you, and found you. And brought you back. This is your world, Lord

Ganelon! Will you accept it?"

I shook my head dizzily.

"It isn't real. I'm still Edward Bond."

BUT she persisted. "We can bring back your true memories. And we will. They came to the surface for a moment, I think, just now. But it will take time. Meanwhile, you are one of the Coven, and Edward Bond is back upon Earth in his old place. Remembering—" she laughed softly— "remembering, I am sure, all he left undone here. But helpless to return, or meddle again in what does not concern him. But we have needed you, Ganelon. How badly we have needed you!"

"What can I do? I'm Edward Bond."

"Ganelon can do much—when he remembers. The Coven has fallen upon evil days. Once we were thirteen. Once there were other Covens to join us in our Sabbats. Once we ruled this whole world, under Great Llyr. But Llyr is falling asleep now. He draws farther and farther away from his worshippers. By degrees the Dark World has fallen into savagery. And, of all the Covens, only we remain, a broken circle, dwelling close to Caer Llyr where the Great One sleeps beyond his Golden Window." She fell silent for a moment.

"Sometimes I think that Llyr does not sleep at all," she said. "I think he is withdrawing, little by little, into some farther world, losing his interest in us whom he created. But he returns!" She laughed. "Yes, he returns when the sacrifices stand before his Window. And so long as he comes back, the Coven has power to force its will upon the Dark World.

"But day by day the forest rebels grow stronger, Ganelon. With our help, you were gathering power to oppose them—when you vanished. We needed you then, and we need you more than ever now. You are one of the Coven, perhaps the greatest of us all. With Matholch you were—"

"Wait a minute," I said. "Matholch? Was he the wolf I saw?"

"He was."

"You spoke of him as though he were a man."

"He *is* a man—at times. He is lycanthropic. A shape-changer."

"A werewolf? It's impossible. It's a myth, a bit of crazy folklore."

"What started the myth?" Edeyrn asked. "Long ago, there were many gateways opened between the Dark World and Earth. On Earth, memories of those days survive as superstitious tales. Folklore. But with roots in reality."

It's superstition, nothing else," I said, flatly. "You actually mean that werewolves, vampires and all that, exist."

"Ghast Rhymi could tell you more of this than I can. But we cannot wake him for such a matter. Perhaps I—well, listen. The body is composed of cells. These are adaptable to some extent. When they are made even more adaptable, when metabolism is accelerated sporadically, werewolves come into being."

The sweet, sexless child's voice spoke on from the shadow of the hood. I began to understand a little. On Earth, college biology had showed me instances of cells run wild, malignant tumors and the like. And there were many cases of "wolfmen," with thick hair growing like a pelt over them. If the cells could adapt themselves *quickly*, strange things might occur.

But the bones? Specialized osseous tissues, not the rigidly brittle bones of the normal man. A physiological structure that could, theoretically, so alter itself that it would be wolf instead of man, was astounding!

"Part of it is illusion, of course," Edeyrn said. "Matholch is not as bestial in form as he seems. Yet he *is* a shape-changer, and his form does alter."

"But how?" I asked. "How did he get this power?"

FOR the first time Edeyrn seemed to hesitate. "He is—a mutation. There are many mutations among us, here in the Dark World. Some are in the Coven, but others are elsewhere."

"Are you a mutation?" I asked her.

"Yes."

"A—shape-changer?"

"No," Edeyrn said, and the thin body under the robe seemed to shake a little. "No, I cannot change my shape, Lord Ganelon. You do not remember my—my powers?"

"I do not."

"Yet you may find them useful when the Rebels strike again," she said slowly. "Yes, there are mutations among us, and perhaps that is the chief reason why the probability-rift came ages ago. There are no mutants on Earth—at least not of our type. Matholch is not the only one."

"Am I a mutant?" I asked very softly.

The cowled head shook.

"No. For no mutant may be sealed to Llyr. As you have been sealed. One of the Coven must know the key to Caer Llyr."

The cold breath of fear touched me again. No, not fear. Horror, the deadly, monstrous breathlessness that always took me when the name of Llyr was mentioned.

I forced myself to say, "Who is Llyr?"

There was a long silence.

"Who speaks of Llyr?" a deep voice behind me asked. "Better not to lift *that* veil, Edeyrn!"

"Yet it may be necessary," Edeyrn said.

I turned, and saw, framed against the dark portiere, the rangy, whipcord figure of a man, clad as I was in tunic and trunks. His red, pointed beard jutted; the half-snarling curve of his full lips reminded me of something. Agile grace was in every line of his wiry body.

Yellow eyes watched me with wry amusement.

"Pray it may not be necessary," the man said. "Well, Lord Ganelon? Have you forgotten me, too?"

"He has forgotten you, Matholch," Edeyrn said. "At least in this form!"

Matholch—the wolf! The shape-changer!

He grinned.

"It is Sabbat tonight," he said. "The Lord Ganelon must be prepared for it. Also, I think there will be trouble. However, that is Medea's business, and she asks if Ganelon is awake. Since he is, let us see her now."

"Will you go with Matholch?" Edeyrn asked me.

"I suppose so," I said. The red-beard grinned again.

"Ai, you *have* forgotten, Ganelon! In the old days you'd never have trusted me behind your back with a dagger."

"You always knew better than to strike," Edeyrn said. "If Ganelon ever called on Llyr, it would be unfortunate for you!"

"Well, I joked," Matholch said carelessly. "My enemies must be strong enough to give me a fight so I'll wait till your memory comes back, Lord Ganelon. Meanwhile the Coven has its back to the wall, and I need you as badly as you need me. Will you come?"

"Go with him," Edeyrn said. "You are in no danger—wolf's bark is worse than wolf's bite—even though this is not Caer Llyr."

I thought I sensed a hidden threat in her words. Matholch shrugged and held the curtain aside to let me pass.

"Few dare to threaten a shape-changer," he said over his shoulder.

"I dare," Edeyrn said, from the enigmatic shadows of her saffron cowl. And I remembered that she was a mutant too—though not a lycanthrope, like the red-bearded werewolf striding beside me along the vaulted passage.

What was—Edeyrn?

IV

UP to now the true wonder of the situation had not really touched me yet. The anaesthesia of shock had dulled me. As a soldier—caught in the white light of a flare dropped from an overhead plane—freezes into immobility, so my mind still remained passive. Only superficial thoughts were moving there, as

though, by concentration on immediate needs, I could eliminate the incredible fact that I was not on the familiar, solid ground of Earth.

But it was more than this. There was a curious, indefinable familiarity about these groined, pale-walled halls through which I strode beside Matholch, as there had been a queer familiarity about the twilit landscape stretching to forested distance beneath the window of my room.

Edeyrn—Medea—the Coven.

The names had significance, like words in a language that I had once known well, but had forgotten.

The half-loping, swift walk of Matholch, the easy swing of his muscular shoulders, the snarling smile on his redbearded lips—these were not new to me.

He watched me furtively out of his yellow eyes. Once we paused before a red-figured drapery, and Matholch, hesitating, thrust the curtain aside and gestured me forward.

I took one step—and stopped. I looked at him.

He nodded as though satisfied. Yet there was still a question in his face.

"So you remember a little, eh? Enough to know that this isn't the way to Medea. However, come along, for a moment. I want to talk to you."

As I followed him up a winding stair, I suddenly realized that he had not spoken in English. But I had understood him, as I had understood Edeyrn and Medea.

Ganelon?

WE were in a tower room, walled with transparent panes. There was a smoky, sour odor in the air, and gray tendrils coiled up from a brazier set in a tripod in the middle of the chamber. Matholch gestured me to one of the couches by the windows. He dropped carelessly beside me.

"I wonder how much you remember," he said.

I shook my head.

"Not much. Enough not to be too—trusting."

"The artificial Earth-memories are still strong, then. Ghast Rhymí said you would remember eventually, but that it would take time. The false writing on the slate of your mind will fade, and the old, true memories will come back. After a while."

Like a palimpsest, I thought—manuscript with two writings upon its parchment. But Ganelon was still a stranger; I was still Edward Bond.

"I wonder," Matholch said slowly, staring at me. "You spent much time exiled. I wonder if you have changed, basically. Always before—you hated me, Ganelon. Do you hate me now?"

"No," I said. "At least, I don't know. I think I distrust you."

"You have reason. If you remember at all. We have always been enemies, Ganelon, though bound together by the needs and laws of the Coven. I wonder if we need be enemies any longer?"

"It depends. I'm not anxious to make enemies—especially here."

Matholch's red brows drew together.

"Ai, that is not Ganelon speaking! In the old days, you cared nothing about how many enemies you made. If you have changed so much, danger to us all may result."

"My memory is gone," I said. "I don't understand much of this. It seems dreamlike."

Now he sprang up and restlessly paced the room. "That's well. If you become the old Ganelon again, we'll be enemies again. That I know. But if Earth-exile has changed you—altered you—we may be friends. It would be better to be friends. Medea would not like it; I do not think Edeyrn would. As for Ghast Rhymi—" he shrugged—"Ghast Rhymi is old—old. In all the Dark World, Ganelon, you have the most power. Or can have. But it would mean going to Caer Llyr." Matholch stooped to look into my eyes.

"In the old days, you knew what that meant. You were afraid, but you wanted

the power. Once you went to Caer Llyr—to be sealed. So there is a bond between you and Llyr—not consummated yet. But it can be, if you wish it."

"What is Llyr?" I asked.

"Pray that you will not remember that," Matholch said. "When Medea talks to you—beware when she speaks of Llyr. I may be friend of yours or enemy, Ganelon, but for my own sake, for the sake of the Dark World—even for the sake of the rebels—I warn you: do not go to Caer Llyr. No matter what Medea asks. Or promises. At least be wary till you have your memories back."

"What is Llyr?" I said again.

Matholch swung around, his back to me. "Ghast Rhymi knows, I think. I do not. Nor do I want to. Llyr is—is evil—and is hungry, always. But what feeds his appetite is—is—" He stopped.

"You have forgotten," he went on after a while. "One thing I wonder. Have you forgotten how to summon Llyr?"

I did not answer. There was a darkness in my mind, an ebon gate against which my questioning thoughts probed vainly.

Llyr—Llyr?

Matholch cast a handful of powdery substance into the glowing brazier.

"Can you summon Llyr?" he asked again, his voice soft. "Answer, Ganelon. Can you?"

THE sour smoke-stench grew stronger. The darkness in my head sprang apart, riven, as though a gateway had opened in the shadow. I—recognized that deadly perfume.

I stood up, glaring at Matholch. I took two steps, thrust out my sandaled foot, and overturned the brazier. Embers scattered on the stone floor. The red-beard turned a startled face to me.

I reached out, gripped Matholch's tunic, and shook him till his teeth rattled together. Hot fury filled me—and something more.

That Matholch should try his tricks on me!

A stranger had my tongue. I heard myself speaking.

"Save your spells for the slaves and helots," I snarled. "I tell you what I wish to tell you—no more than that! Burn your filthy herbs elsewhere, not in my presence!"

Red-bearded jaw jutted. Yellow eyes flamed. Matholch's face altered, flesh flowing like water, dimly seen in the smokeclouds that poured up from the scattered embers.

Yellow tusks threatened me through the gray mists.

The shape-changer made a wordless noise in his throat—the guttural sound a beast might make. Wolf-cry! A wolf mask glared into mine!

The smoke swam away. The illusion—illusion?—was gone. Matholch, his face relaxing from its snarling lines, pulled gently free from my grip.

"You—startled me, Lord Ganelon," he said smoothly. "But I think that I have had a question answered, whether or not these herbs—" he nodded toward the overturned brazier—"had anything to do with it."

I turned toward the doorway.

"Wait," Matholch said. "I took something from you, a while ago."

I stopped.

The red-beard came toward me, holding out a weapon—a bared sword.

"I took this from you when we passed through the Need-fire," he said. "It is yours."

I accepted the blade.

Again I moved toward the curtained archway.

Behind me Matholch spoke softly.

"We are not enemies yet, Ganelon," he said gently. "And, if you are wise, you will not forget my warning. Do not go to Caer Llyr."

I went out. Holding the sword, I hurried down the winding stairway. My feet found their path without conscious guidance. The—intruder—in my brain was still strong. A palimpsest. And the

blurred, erased writing was becoming visible, as though treated with some strong chemical.

The writing that was my lost memory.

The castle—how did I know it was a castle?—was a labyrinth. Twice I passed silent soldiers standing guard, with a familiar shadow of fear in their eyes—a shadow that, I thought, deepened as they saw me.

I went on, hurrying along a pale-amber hallway. I brushed aside a golden curtain and stepped into an oval room, domeceilinged, walled with pale, silken draperies. A fountain spurted, its spray cool on my cheek. Across the chamber, an archway showed the outlines of leafy branches beyond.

I WENT on through the arch. I stepped out into a walled garden. A garden of exotic flowers and bizarre trees.

The blooms were a riot of patternless color, like glowing jewels against the dark earth. Ruby and amethyst, crystal-clear and milky white, silver and gold and emerald, the flowers made a motionless carpet. But the trees were not motionless.

Twisted and gnarled as oaks, their black holes and branches were veiled by a luxuriant cloud of leafage, virulent green.

A stir of movement rippled through that green curtain. The trees roused to awareness.

I saw the black branches twist and writhe slowly—

Satisfied, their vigilance relaxed. They were motionless again. They—knew me.

Beyond that evil orchard the dark sky made the glowing ember of the sun more brilliant by contrast.

The trees stirred again.

Ripples of unrest shook the green. A serpentine limb, trailing a veil of leaves, lashed out—struck—whipped back into place.

Where it had been a darting shape ran forward, ducking and twisting as the guardian trees struck savagely at it.

A man, in a tight-fitting suit of earth-brown and forest-green, came running toward me, his feet trampling the jewel-flowers. His hard, reckless face was alight with excitement and a kind of triumph. He was empty-handed, but a pistol- like weapon of some sort swung at his belt.

"Edward!" he said urgently, yet keeping his voice low. "Edward Bond!"

I knew him. Or I knew him for what he was. I had seen dodging, furtive, green-clad figures like his before, and an anger already familiar surged over me at the very sight of him.

Enemy, upstart! One of the many who had dared work their magic upon the great Lord Ganelon.

I felt the heat of rage suffuse my face, and the blood rang in my ears with this unfamiliar, yet well-known fury. My body stiffened in the posture of Ganelon—shoulders back, lip curled, chin high. I heard myself curse the fellow in a voice that was choked and a language I scarcely remembered. And I saw him draw back, disbelief vivid upon his face. His hand dropped to his belt.

"Ganelon?" he faltered, his eyes narrow as they searched mine. "Edward, are you with us or are you Ganelon again?"

V

GRIPPED in my right hand I still held the sword. I cut at him savagely by way of answer. He sprang back, glanced once over his shoulder, and drew his weapon. I followed his glance and saw another green figure dodging forward among the trees. It was smaller and slenderer—a girl, in a tunic the color of earth and forest. Her black hair swung upon her shoulders. She was tugging at her belt as she ran, and the face she turned to me was ugly with hate, teeth showing in a snarl.

The man before me was saying something.

"Edward, listen to me!" he was crying. "Even if you're Ganelon, you re-

member Edward Bond! He was with us —he believed in us. Give us a hearing before it's too late! Arles could convince you, Edward! Come to Arles. Even if you're Ganelon, let me take you to Arles!"

"It's no use, Ertu," the voice of the girl cried thinly. She was struggling with the last of the trees, whose flexible bough-tips still clutched to stop her. Neither of them tried now to keep their voices down. They were shouting, and I knew they must rouse the guards at any moment, and I wanted to kill them both myself before anyone came to forestall me by accident. I was hungry and thirsty for the blood of these enemies, and in that moment the name of Edward Bond was not even a memory.

"Kill him, Ertu!" cried the girl. "Kill him, or stand out of the way! I know Ganelon! "

I looked at her and took a fresh grip on my sword. Yes, she spoke the truth. She knew Ganelon. And Ganelon knew her, and remembered dimly that she had reason for her hate. I had seen that face before, contorted with fury and despair. I could not recall when or where or why, but she looked familiar.

The man Ertu drew his weapon reluctantly. To him I was still at least the image of a friend. I laughed exultantly and swung at him again with the sword, hearing it hiss viciously through the air. This time I drew blood. He stepped back again, lifting his weapon so that I looked down its black barrel.

"Don't make me do it," he said between his teeth. "This will pass. You have been Edward Bond—you will be again. Don't make me kill you, Ganelon!"

I lifted the sword, seeing him only dimly through a ruddy haze of anger. There was a great exultation in me. I could already see the fountain of blood that would leap from his severed arteries when my blade completed its swing.

I braced my body for that great full-armed blow!

And the sword came alive in my hand. It leaped and shuddered against my fist.

Impossibly—in a way I cannot describe—that blow reversed itself. All the energy I was braced to expend upon my enemy recoiled up the sword, up my arm, crashed against my own body. A violent explosion of pain and shock sent the garden reeling. The earth struck hard against my knees.

MIST cleared from my eyes. I was still Ganelon, but a Ganelon dizzy from something more powerful than a blow.

I was kneeling on the grass, braced with one hand, shaking the throbbing fingers of my sword-hand and staring at the sword that lay a dozen feet away, still faintly glowing.

It was Matholch's doing—I knew that! I should have remembered how little I could trust that shifting, unstable wolfling. I had laid hands upon him in his tower-room—I should have known he would have his revenge for that. Even Edward Bond—soft fool that he was—would have been wise enough not to accept a gift from the shape-changer.

There was no time now for anger at Matholch, though. I was looking up into Ertu's eyes, and into the muzzle of his weapon, and a look of decision grew slowly in his face as he scanned mine.

"Ganelon!" he said, almost whispering. "Warlock!"

He tilted the weapon down at me, his finger moving on the trigger.

"Wait, Ertu!" cried a thin voice behind him. "Wait—let me!"

I looked up, still dazed. It had all happened so quickly that the girl was still struggling in the edge of the trees, though she cleared them as I looked and lifted her own weapon. Behind it her face was white and blazing with relentless hate. "Let me!" she cried again. "He owes me this!"

I was helpless. I knew that even at this distance she would not miss. I saw the glare of fury in her eyes and I saw the muzzle waver a little as her hand

shook with rage, but I knew she would not miss me. I thought of a great many things in that instant—confused memories of Ganelon's and of Edward Bond's surged together through my mind.

Then a great hissing like a wind swept up among the trees behind the girl. They all swayed toward her more swiftly than trees have any right to move, stooping and straining and hissing with a dreadful, vicious avidity. Ertu shouted something inarticulate. But I think the girl was too angry to hear or see.

She never knew what happened. She could only have felt the great bone-cracking sweep of the nearest branch, reaching out for her from the leaning tree. She fired as the blow struck her, and a white-hot bolt ploughed up the turf at my knee. I could smell the charring grass.

The girl screamed thinly once as the avid boughs writhed together over her. The limbs threshed about her in a furious welter, and I heard one clear and distinct snap—a sound I had heard before, I knew, in this garden. The human spine is no more than a twig in the grip of those mighty boughs.

Ertu was stunned for one brief instant. Then he whirled to me, and this time I knew his finger would not hesitate on the trigger.

But time had run out for the two woods-people. He was not fully turned when there came a laugh, cool and amused, from behind me. I saw loathing and hatred flash across Ertu's bronzed face, and the weapon whirled away from me and pointed toward someone at my back. But before he could press the trigger something like an arrow of white light sprang over my shoulder and struck him above the heart.

He dropped instantly, his mouth frozen in a snarling square, his eyes staring.

I TURNED, getting slowly to my feet. Medea stood there smiling, very slim and lovely in a close-fitting scarlet gown.

[*Turn page*]

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In her hand was a small black rod, still raised. Her purple eyes met mine.

"Ganelon," she murmured in an infinitely caressing voice. "Ganelon." And still holding my gaze with hers, she clapped her hands softly.

Silent, swift-moving guardsmen came and lifted the motionless body of Ertu. They carried him away. The trees stirred, whispered—and fell silent.

"You have remembered," Medea said. "Ganelon is ours again. Do you remember me—Lord Ganelon?"

Medea, witch of Colchis! Black and white and crimson, she stood there smiling at me, her strange loveliness stirring old, forgotten memories in my blood. No man who had known Medea could ever forget her wholly. Not till time ended.

But wait! There was something more about Medea that I must remember. Something that made even Ganelon a little doubtful, a little cautious. Ganelon? Was I Ganelon again? I had been wholly my old self when the woods-people stood before me, but now I was uncertain.

The memories ebbed. While the lovely witch stood smiling at me, not guessing, all that had made me so briefly Ganelon dropped from my mind and body like a discarded cloak. Edward Bond stood there in my clothing, staring about the clearing and remembering with dismay and sick revulsion what had just been happening here.

For a moment I turned away to hide from Medea what my face must betray if she saw it. I felt dizzy with more than memory. The knowledge that two identities shared my body was a thought even more disturbing than the memory of what I had just done in the grip of Ganelon's strong, evil will.

This was Ganelon's body. There could be no doubt of it now. Somewhere on Earth Edward Bond was back in his old place, but the patterns of his memory still overlaid my mind, so that he and I shared a common soul, and there was no Ganelon except briefly, in snatches, as the memories that were rightfully mine—mine?—returned to crowd out Edward Bond.

I hated Ganelon. I rejected all he thought and was. My false memories, the heritage from Edward Bond, was stronger in me than Ganelon. I *was* Edward Bond—now!

Medea's caressing voice broke in upon my conflict, echoing her question.

"Do you remember me, Lord Ganelon?"

I turned to her, feeling the bewilderment on my own face, so that my very thoughts were blurred.

"My name is Bond," I told her stubbornly.

She sighed.

"You will come back," she said. "It will take time, but Ganelon will return to us. As you see familiar things again, the life of the Dark World, the life of the Coven, the doors of your mind will open once more. You will remember a little more tonight, I think, at the Sabbat." Her red smile was suddenly almost frightening.

"Not since I went into the Earth-world has a Sabbat been held, and it is long past time," she went on. "For in Caer Llyr there is one who stirs and grows for his sacrifice."

She looked at me piercingly, the purple eyes narrowing.

"Do you remember Caer Llyr, Ganelon?"

THE old sickness and horror came over me as she repeated that cryptic name.

Llyr—Llyr! Darkness, and something stirring beyond a golden window. Something too alien to touch the soil that human feet touched, something that should never share the same life humans lived. Touching that soil, sharing that life, it defiled them so that they were no longer fit for humans to share. And yet, despite my revulsion, Llyr was terribly intimate, too!

I knew, I remembered—

"I remember nothing," I told her

shortly. For in that particular moment, caution was born in me. I could not trust anyone, not even myself. Least of all Ganelon—myself. I *did* remember, but I must not let them know. Until I was clearer as to what they wanted, what they threatened, I must keep this one secret which was all the weapon I had.

Llyr! The thought of him—of it—crystallized that decision in my mind. For somewhere in the murk of Ganelon's past there was a frightening link with Llyr. I knew they were trying to push me into that abyss of oneness with Llyr, and I sensed that even Ganelon feared that. I must pretend to be more ignorant than I really was until the thing grew clearer in my memory.

I shook my head again. "I remember nothing."

"Not even Medea?" she whispered, and swayed toward me. There was sorcery about her. My arms received that red and white softness as if they were Ganelon's arms, not mine. But it was Edward Bond's lips which responded to the fierce pressure of her lips.

Not even Medea?

Edward Bond or Ganelon, what was it to me then? The moment was enough.

But the touch of the red witch wrought a change in Edward Bond. It brought a sense of strangeness, of utter strangeness, to him—to me. I held her lovely, yielding body in my arms, but something alien and unknown stooped and hovered above me as we touched. I surmised that she was holding herself in check—restraining a—a demon that possessed her—a demon that fought to free itself.

"Ganelon!"

Trembling, she pressed her palms against my chest and thrust free. Tiny droplets stood on her pale forehead.

"Enough!" she whispered. "You know!"

"What, Medea?"

And now stark horror stood in those purple eyes.

"You have forgotten!" she said. "You have forgotten me, forgotten who I am, *what* I am!"

VI

LATER, in the apartments that had been Ganelon's, I waited for the hour of Sabbat. And as I waited, I paced the floor restlessly. Ganelon's feet, pacing Ganelon's floor, but the man who walked here was Edward Bond. Amazing, I thought, how the false memory-patterns of another person, impressed upon Ganelon's clean-sponged brain, had changed him from himself to—me.

I wondered if I would ever be sure again which personality was myself. I hated and distrusted Ganelon, now. But I knew how easily the old self slipped back, in which I would despise Edward Bond.

And yet, to save myself, I must call back Ganelon's memories. I must know more than those around me guessed I knew, or I thought Ganelon and Bond together might be lost. Medea would tell me nothing. Edeyrn would tell me nothing. Matholch might tell me much, but he would be lying.

I scarcely dared go with them to this Sabbat, which I thought would be the Sabbat of Llyr, because of that strange and terrible link between Llyr and myself. There would be sacrifices.

How could I be sure I, myself, was not destined for the altar before that—that golden window?

Then, for a brief but timeless moment Ganelon came back, remembering fragmentary things that flitted through my mind too swiftly to take shape. I caught only terror—terror and revulsion and a hideous, hopeless longing....

Dared I attend the Sabbat?

But I dared not fail to attend, for if I refused I must admit I knew more about what threatened Ganelon than Edward Bond should know. And my only frail weapon against them now was what little I recalled that was secret from them. I must go. Even if the altar waited me, I must go.

There were the woodspeople. They were outlaws, hunted through the forests by Coven soldiers. Capture meant enslavement—I remembered the look of still horror in the eyes of those living dead men who were Medea's servants. As Edward Bond, I pitied them, wondered if I could do anything to save them from the Coven. The real Edward Bond had been living among them for a year and a half, organizing resistance, fighting the Coven. On Earth, I knew he must be raging helplessly now, haunted by the knowledge of work unfinished and friends abandoned to the mercies of dark magic.

Perhaps I should seek the woodspeople out. Among them, at least, I would be safe while my memories returned. But when they returned—why, then Ganelon would rage, running amuck among them, mad with his own fury and arrogance. Dared I subject the woodspeople to the danger that would be the Lord Ganelon when Ganelon's memories came back? Dared I subject myself to their vengeance, for they would be many against one?

I could not go and I could not stay. There was safety nowhere for the Edward Bond who might become Ganelon at any moment. There was danger everywhere. From the rebel woodspeople, from every member of this Coven.

It might come through the wild and mocking Matholch.

Or through Edeyrn, who had watched me unseen with her chilling gaze in the shadows of her cowl.

Through Ghast Rhymi, whoever *he* was. Through Arles, or through the red witch!

Yes, most of all, I thought, through Medea—Medea, whom I loved!

AT dusk, two maidens—helot-servants—came, bringing food and a change of garments. I ate hurriedly, dressed in the plain, fine-textured tunic and shorts, and drew about me the royal blue cloak they had carried. A mask of golden cloth I dangled undecidedly, until one of the maidens spoke.

"We are to guide you when you are ready, Lord," she reminded me.

"I'm ready now," I said, and followed the pair.

A pale, concealed lighting system of some sort made the hallways bright. I was taken to Medea's apartment, with its singing fountain under the high dome. The red witch was there breath-takingly lovely in a clinging robe of pure white. Above the robe her naked shoulders gleamed smoothly. She wore a scarlet cloak. I wore a blue one.

The helots slipped away. Medea smiled at me, but I noticed a wire-taut tenseness about her, betrayingly visible at the corners of her lips and in her eyes. A pulse of expectation seemed to beat out from her.

"Are you ready, Ganelon?"

"I don't know," I said. "It depends, I suppose. Don't forget that my memory's gone."

"It may return tonight, some of it anyway," she said. "But you will take no part in the ritual, at least until after the sacrifice. It will be better if you merely watch. Since you do not remember the rites, you'd best leave those to the rest of the Coven."

"Matholch?"

"And Edeyrn," Medea said. "Ghast Rhymi will not come. He never leaves this castle, nor will he unless the need is very great. He is old, too old."

I frowned at the red witch. "Where are we going?" I asked.

"To Caer Secaire. I told you there has been no sacrifice since I went to the Earth-world to search for you. It is past time."

"What am I supposed to do?"

She put out a slender hand and touched mine.

"Nothing, till the moment comes. You will know then. But meantime you must watch—no more than that. Put on your mask now."

She slipped on a small black mask that left the lower half of her face visible.

I donned the golden mask. I followed

Medea to a curtained archway, and through it.

We were in a courtyard. Two horses stood waiting, held by grooms. Medea mounted one and I the other.

OVERHEAD the sky had darkened. A huge door lifted in the wall. Beyond, a roadway stretched toward the distant forest. The somber, angry disc of the red sun, swollen and burning with a dull fire, touched the crest of the mountain barrier.

Swiftly it sank. Darkness came across the sky with a swooping rush. A million points of white light became visible. In the faint starshine Medea's face was ghost-pale.

Through the near-darkness her eyes glowed.

Faintly, and from far away, I heard a thin, trumpeting call. It was repeated.

Then silence—and a whispering that rose to a rhythmic thudding of shod hoofs.

Past us moved a figure, a helot guardsman, unmasked, unspeaking, his gaze turned to the waiting gateway.

Then another—and another. Until three score of soldiers had gone past, and after them nearly three score of maidens—the slave-girls.

On a light, swift-looking roan stallion Matholch came by, stealing a glance at me from his yellow eyes. A cloak of forest green swirled from his shoulders.

Behind him, the tiny form of Edeyrn, on a pony suited to her smallness. She was still cowled, her face hidden, but she now wore a cloak of purest yellow.

Medea nodded at me. We touched our heels to the horses' flanks and took our places in the column. Behind us other figures rode, but I could not see them clearly. It was too dark.

Through the gateway in the wall we went, still in silence save for the clopping of hoofs. We rode across the plain. The edges of the forest reached out toward us and swallowed us.

I glanced behind. A bulk against the sky showed the castle I had left.

We rode under heavy, drooping branches. These were not the black trees of Medea's garden, but they were not normal either. I could not tell why an indefinable sense of strangeness reached out at me from the dim shadows above and around us.

After a long time the ground dipped at our feet, and we saw below us the road's end. The moon had risen belatedly. By its yellow glare there materialized from the deep valley below us a sort of tower, a dark, windowless structure almost Gothic in plan, as though it had thrust itself from the black earth, from the dark grove of ancient and alien trees.

Caer Secaire!

I had been here before. Ganelon of the Dark World knew this spot well. But I did not know it; I sensed only that unpleasant familiarity, the *deja vu* phenomenon, known to all psychologists, coupled with a curious depersonalization, as though my own body, my mind, my very soul, felt altered and strange.

Caer Secaire. Secaire? Somewhere, in my studies, I had encountered that name. An ancient rite, in—in Gascony, that was it!

The Mass of Saint Secaire!

And the man for whom that Black Mass is said—dies. That, too, I remembered. Was the Mass to be said for Ganelon tonight?

This was not the Place of Llyr. Somehow I knew that. Caer Llyr was elsewhere and otherwise, not a temple, not a place visited by worshippers. But here in Caer Secaire, as in other temples throughout the Dark Land, Llyr might be summoned to his feasting, and, summoned, would come.

Would Ganelon be his feast tonight? I clenched the reins with nervous hands. There was some tension in the air that I could not quite understand. Medea was calm beside me. Edeyrn was always calm. Matholch, I could swear, had nothing to take the place of nerves. Yet in the night there was tension, as if it breathed upon us from the dark trees

along the roadside.

Before us, in a silent, submissive flock, the soldiers and the slave-girls went. Some of the soldiers were armed. They seemed to be herding the rest, their movements mechanical, as if whatever had once made them free-willed humans was now asleep. I knew without being told the purpose for which those men and maidens were being driven toward Caer Secaire. But not even these voiceless mindless victims were tense. They went blindly to their doom. No, the tension came from the dark around us.

Someone, something, waiting in the night!

VII

FROM out of the dark woods, suddenly, startlingly, a trumpet-note rang upon the air. In the same instant there was a wild crashing in the underbrush, an outburst of shouts and cries, and the night was laced by the thin lightnings of unfamilar gunfire. The road was suddenly thronging with green-clad figures who swarmed about the column of slaves ahead of us, grappling with the guards, closing in between us and the mindless victims at our forefront.

My horse reared wildly. I fought him hard, forcing him down again, while stirrings of the old red rage I had left before mounted in my brain. Ganelon, at sight of the forest people, struggled to take control. Him too I fought. Even in my surprise and bewilderment, I saw in this interruption the possibility of succor. I cracked my rearing horse between the ears with clubbed rein-loops and struggled to keep my balance.

Beside me Medea had risen in her stirrups and was sending bolt after arrowy bolt into the green melee ahead of us, the dark rod that was her weapon leaping in her hand with every shot. Edeyrn had drawn aside, taking no part in the fight. Her small cowled figure sat crouching in the saddle, but her very stillness was alarming. I had the feeling she could end the combat in a moment if she chose.

As for Matholch, his saddle was empty. His horse was already crashing away through the woods, and Matholch had buried himself headlong into the fight, snarling joyously. The sound sent cold shudders down my spine. I could see that his green cloak covered a shape that was not wholly manlike, and the green people veered away from him as he plunged through their throngs toward the head of the column.

The woodsfolk were trying a desperate rescue. I realized that immediately. I saw too that they dared not attack the Coven itself. All their efforts were aimed at overpowering the robotlike guards so that the equally robotlike victims might be saved from Llyr. And I could see that they were failing.

For the victims were too apathetic to scatter. All will had long ago been drained away from them. They obeyed orders—that was all. And the forest people were leaderless. In a moment or two I realized that, and knew why. It was my fault. Edward Bond may have planned this daring raid, but through my doing, he was not here to guide them. And already the abortive fight was nearly over.

MEDEA'S flying fiery arrows struck down man after man. The mindless guards fired stolidly into the swarms that surged about them, and Matholch's deep-throated, exultant, snarling yells as he fought his way toward his soldiers were more potent than weapons. The raiders shrank back from the sound as they did not shrink from gunfire. In a moment, I knew, Matholch would reach his men, and organized resistance would break the back of this unguided mutiny.

For an instant my own mind was a fierce battleground. Ganelon struggled to take control, and Edward Bond resisted him savagely.

As Ganelon I knew my place was beside the wolfling; every instinct urged me forward to his side. But Edward

Bond knew better. Edward Bond too knew where his rightful place should be.

I shoved up my golden mask so that my face was visible. I drove my heels into my horse's sides and urged him headlong down the road behind Matholch. The sheer weight of the horse gave me an advantage Matholch, afoot, did not have. The sound of drumming hoofs and the lunging shoulders of my mount opened a way for me. I rose in the stirrups and shouted with Ganelon's deep, carrying roar:

"Bond! Bond! Edward Bond!"

The rebels heard me. For an instant the battle around the column wavered as every green-clad man paused to look back. Then they saw their lost leader, and a great echoing hail swept their ranks.

"Bond! Edward Bond!"

The forest rang with it, and there was new courage in the sound. Matholch's wild snarl of rage was drowned in the roar of the forest men as they surged forward again to the attack.

Out of Ganelon's memories I knew what I must do. The foresters were dragging down guard after guard, careless of the gunfire that mowed their disordered ranks. But only I could save the prisoners. Only Ganelon's voice could pierce the daze that held them.

I kicked my frantic horse forward, knocking guards left and right, and gained the head of the column.

"In the forest!" I shouted. "Waken and run! Run hard!"

There was an instant forward surge as the slaves, still tranced in their dreadful dream, but obedient to the voice of a Coven member, lurched through the thin rank of their guard. The whole shape of the struggle changed as the core of it streamed irresistibly forward across the road and into the darkness of the woods.

The green-clad attackers fell back to let the slaves through. It was a strange, voiceless flight they made. Not even the guards shouted, though they fired and fired again upon the retreating column, their faces as blank as if they slept without dreams.

My flesh crawled as I watched that sight—the men and women fleeing for their lives, the faces of them all utterly without expression. Voiceless they ran and voiceless they died when the gunbolts found them.

I wrenched my horse around and kicked him in the wake of the fleeing column. My golden mask slipped sidewise and I tore it off, waving to the scattering foresters, the moonlight catching brightly on its gold.

"Save yourselves!" I shouted, "Scatter and follow me!"

BEHIND me I heard Matholch's deep snarl, very near. I glanced over one shoulder as my horse plunged across the road. The shape-changer's tall figure faced me across the heads of several of his soldiers. His face was a wolflike snarling mask, and as I looked he lifted a dark rod like the one Medea had been using. I saw the arrow of white fire leap from it, and ducked in the saddle.

The movement saved me. I felt a strong tug at my shoulders where the blue cape swirled out, and heard the tear of fabric as the bolt ripped through it and plunged hissing into the dark beyond. My horse lunged on into the woods.

Then the trees were rustling all about me, and my bewildered horse stumbled and tossed up his head, whinnying in terror. Besides me in the dark a soft voice spoke softly.

"This way," it said, and a hand seized the bridle.

I let the woodsmen lead me into the darkness.

It was just dawn when our weary column came at last to the end of the journey, to the valley between cliffs where the woodsmen had established their stronghold. All of us were tired, though the blank-faced slaves we had rescued trudged on in an irregular column behind me, unaware that their feet were torn and their bodies droop-

ing with exhaustion.

The forest men slipped through the trees around us, alert for followers. We had no wounded with us. The bolts the Coven shot never wounded. Whoever was struck fell dead in his tracks.

In the pale dawn I would not have known the valley before me for the headquarters of a populous clan. It looked quite empty except for scattered boulders, mossy slopes and a small stream that trickled down the middle, pink in the light of sunrise, tinkling melodiously.

One of the men took my horse then, and we went on foot up the valley, the robot slaves crowding behind. We seemed to be advancing up an empty valley. But when we had gone half its length, suddenly the woodsman at my right laid his hand upon my arm, and we paused, the rabble behind us jostling together without a murmur. Around me the woodsmen laughed softly. I looked up.

She stood high upon a boulder that overhung the stream. She was dressed like a man in a tunic of soft, velvety green, cross-belted with a weapon swinging at each hip, but her hair was a fabulous mantle streaming down over her shoulders and hanging almost to her knees in a cascade of pale gold that rippled like water. A crown of pale gold leaves the color of the hair held it away from her face, and under the shining chaplet she looked down and smiled at us. Especially she smiled at me—at Edward Bond.

And her face was very lovely. It had the strength and innocence and calm serenity of a saint's face, but there was warmth and humor in the red lips. Her eyes were the same color as her tunic, deep green, a color I had never seen before in my own world—a color that stirred my blood.

"Welcome back, Edward Bond," she said in a clear, sweet, gently hushed voice, as if she had spoken softly for so many years that even now she did not dare speak aloud.

SHE jumped down from the boulder, very lightly, moving with the sureness of a wild creature that had lived all its lifetime in the woods, as indeed I suppose she had. Her hair floated about her as lightly as a web, settling only slowly about her shoulders as she came forward, so that she seemed to walk in a halo of her own pale gold.

I remembered what the woodsman Ertu had said to me in Medea's garden before her arrow struck him down.

"Arles could convince you, Edward! Even if you're Ganelon, let me take you to Arles!"

I stood before Arles now. Of that I was sure. And if I had needed any conviction before that the woodsmen's cause was mine, this haloed girl would have convinced me with her first words. But as for Ganelon—

How could I know what Ganelon would do?

That question was answered for me. Before my lips could frame words, before I could plan my next reaction, Arles came toward me, utterly without pretense or consciousness of the watching eyes. She put her hands on my shoulders and kissed me on the mouth.

And that was not like Medea's kiss—no! Arles' lips were cool and sweet, not warm with the dangerous, alluring honey-musk of the red witch. That intoxication of strange passion I remembered when I had held Medea in my arms did not sweep me now. There was a—a purity about Arles, an honesty that made me suddenly, horribly homesick for Earth.

She drew back. Her moss-green eyes met mine with quiet understanding. She seemed to be waiting.

"Arles," I said, after a moment.

And that seemed to satisfy her. The vague question that had begun to show on her face was gone.

"I wondered," she said. "They didn't hurt you, Edward?"

Instinctively I knew what I had to say.

"No. We hadn't reached Caer Secaire.

If the woodsmen hadn't attacked—well, there'd have been a sacrifice."

Arles reached out and lifted a corner of my torn cloak, her slim fingers light on the silken fabric.

"The blue robe," she said. "Yes, that is the color the sacrifice wears. The gods cast their dice on our side tonight, Edward. Now as for this foul thing, we must get rid of it."

Her green eyes blazed. She ripped the cloak from me, tore it across and dropped it to the ground.

"You will not go hunting again alone," she added. "I told you it was dangerous. But you laughed at me. I'll wager you didn't laugh when the Coven slaves caught you! Or was that the way of it?"

I nodded. A slow, deep fury was rising within me. So blue was the color of sacrifice, was it? My fears hadn't been groundless. At Caer Secaire I would have been the offering, going blindly to my doom. Matholch had known, of course. Trust his wolf-mind to appreciate the joke. Edeyrn, thinking her cool, inhuman thoughts in the shadow of her hood, she had known too. And Medea?

Medea!

She had dared betray me! Me, *Ganelon!*

The Opener of the Gate, the Chosen of Llyr, the great Lord Ganelon! They dared!

Black thunder roared through my brain. I thought: By Llyr, but they'll suffer for this! They'll crawl to my feet like dogs. Begging my mercy!

RAGE had opened the floodgates, and Edward Bond was no more than a set of thin memories that slipped from me as the blue cloak had slipped from my shoulders—the blue cloak of the chosen sacrifice, on the shoulders of the Lord Ganelon!

I blinked blindly around the green-clad circle. How had I come here? How dared these woodsrunners stand in defiance before me? Blood roared in my ears and the woodland swam around me. When it steadied I would draw my weapon and reap these upstarts as a mower reaps his wheat.

But wait!

First, the Coven, my sworn comrades, had betrayed me. Why, *why*? They had been glad enough to see me when they brought me back from the other world, the alien land of Earth. The woodsmen I could slay whenever I wished it—the other problem came first.

And Ganelon was a wise man. I might need these woodspeople to help me in my vengeance. Afterward—ah, afterward!

I strove hard with memory. What could have happened to turn the Coven against me? I could have sworn this had not been Medea's original intention—she had welcomed me back too sincerely for that. Matholch could have influenced her, but again, why, why? Or perhaps it was Edeyrn, or the Old One himself, Ghast Rhymi.

In any case, by the Golden Window that opens on the Abyss, they'd learn their error!

"Edward!" a woman's voice, sweet, and frightened, came to me as if from a great distance. I fought my way up through a whirlpool of fury and hatred. I saw a pale face haloed in floating hair, the green eyes troubled. I remembered.

Beside Arles stood a stranger, a man whose cold gray eyes upon mine provided the shock I needed to bring me back to sanity. He looked at me as if he knew me—knew Ganelon. I had never seen the man before.

He was short and sturdy, young-looking in spite of the gray flecks in his close-cropped beard. His face was tanned so deeply it had almost the color of the brown earth. In his close-fitting green suit he was the perfect personification of a woodrunner, a glider through the forest, unseen and dangerous. Watching the powerful flex of his muscles when he moved, I knew he would be a bad antagonist. And there was deep antagonism in the way he looked at me.

A WHITE, jagged scar had knotted his right cheek, quirking up his thin mouth so that he wore a perpetual crooked, sardonic half-grin. There was no laughter in those gelid gray eyes, though.

And I saw that the circle of woodsmen had drawn back, ringing us, watching.

The bearded man put out his arm and swept Arles behind him. Unarmed, he stepped forward, toward me.

"No, Lorryn," Arles cried. "Don't hurt him."

Lorryn thrust his face into mine.

"Ganelon!" he said.

And at the name a whisper of fear, of hatred, murmured around the circle of woodsfolk. I saw furtive movements, hands slipping quietly toward the hilts of weapons. I saw Arles' face change.

The old-time cunning of Ganelon came to my aid.

"No," I said, rubbing my forehead. "I'm Bond, all right. It was that drug the Coven gave me. It's still working."

"What drug?"

"I don't know," I told Lorryn. "It was that wine of Medea's which I drank. And the long journey tonight has tired me."

I took a few unsteady paces aside and leaned against the boulder, shaking my head as though to clear it. But my ears were alert. The low murmur of suspicion was dying.

Cool fingers touched mine.

"Oh, my dear," Arles said, and whirled on Lorryn. "Do you think I don't know Edward Bond from Ganelon? Lorryn, you're a fool!"

"If the two weren't identical, we'd never have switched them in the first place," Lorryn said roughly. "Be sure, Arles. Very sure!"

Now the whispering grew again. "Better to be sure," the woodsmen murmured. "No risks, Arles! If this is Ganelon, he must die."

The doubt came back into Arles' green eyes. She thrust my hands away and stared at me. And the doubt did not fade. I gave her glance for glance.

"Well, Arles?" I said.

Her lips quivered.

"It can't be. I know, but Lorryn is right. You know that; we can take no risks. To have the devil Ganelon back, after all that's happened, would be disastrous."

Devil, I thought. The devil Ganelon. Ganelon had hated the woodsfolk, yes. But now he had another, greater hatred. In his hour of weakness, the Coven had betrayed him. The woodsfolk could wait. Vengeance could not. It would be the devil Ganelon who would bring Caer Secaire and the Castle crashing down about the ears of the Coven!

Which would mean playing a careful game!

"Yes, Lorryn is right," I said. "You've no way of knowing I'm not Ganelon. Perhaps you know it, Arles—" I smiled at her— "but there must be no chances taken. Let Lorryn test me."

"Well?" Lorryn said, looking at Arles.

Doubtfully she glanced from me to the bearded man.

"I—very well, I suppose."

Lorryn barked laughter.

"My tests might fail. But there is one can see the truth. Freydis."

"Let Freydis test me," I said quickly, and was rewarded by seeing Lorryn hesitate.

"Very well," he said at last. "If I'm wrong, I'll apologize now. But if I'm right, I'll kill you, or try to. There's only one other life I'd enjoy taking the more, and the shape-changer isn't in my reach—yet."

LORRYN touched his scarred cheek. At the thought of Lord Matholch, warmth came into his gray eyes; a distant ember burned for an instant there. I had seen hatred before. But not often had I seen such hatred as Lorryn held for—the wolfling?

Well, let him kill Matholch, if he could! There was another, softer throat in which I wanted to sink my fingers. Nor could all her magic protect the red

witch when Ganelon came back to Caer Secaire, and broke the Coven like rotten twigs in his hands!

Again the black rage thundered up like a deluging tide. That fury had wiped out Edward Bond—but it had not wiped out Ganelon's cunning.

"As you like, Lorryn," I said quietly. "Let's go to Freydis now."

He nodded shortly. Lorryn on one side of me, Arles, puzzled and troubled, on the other, we moved up the valley, surrounded by the woodsfolk. The dazed slaves surged ahead.

The canyon walls closed in. A cave-mouth showed in the granite ahead.

We drew up in a rough semi-circle facing that cavern. Silence fell, broken by the whispering of leaves in the wind. The red sun was rising over the mountain wall.

Out of the darkness came a voice, deep, resonant, powerful.

"I am awake," it said. "What is your need?"

"Mother Freydis, we have helots captured from the Coven," Arles said quickly. "The sleep is on them."

"Send them in to me."

Lorryn gave Arles an angry look. He pushed forward.

"Mother Freydis!" he called.

"I hear."

"We need your sight. This man, Edward Bond—I think he is Ganelon, come back from the Earth-world where you sent him."

There was a long pause.

"Send him into me," the deep voice finally said. "But first the helots."

At a signal from Lorryn the woodsfolk began herding the slaves toward the cave-mouth. They made no resistance. Empty-eyed, they trooped toward that cryptic darkness and, one by one, vanished.

Lorryn looked at me and jerked his head toward the cavern. I smiled.

"When I come out, we shall be friends again as before," I said.

His eyes did not soften.

"Freydis must decide that."

I turned to Arles.

"Freydis shall decide," I said. "But there is nothing to fear, Arles. Remember that. I am not Ganelon."

She watched me, afraid, unsure, as I stepped back a pace or two.

The silent throng of woodsfolk stared, waiting warily. They had their weapons ready.

I laughed softly and turned.

I walked toward the cave-mouth.

The blackness swallowed me.

VIII

STRANGE to relate, I felt sure of myself as I walked up the sloping ramp in the darkness. Ahead of me, around a bend, I could see the glimmer of firelight, and I smiled. It had been difficult to speak with these upstart woodsrunners as if they were my equals, as if I were still Edward Bond. It would be difficult to talk to their witch-woman as if she had as much knowledge as a Lord of the Coven. Some she must have, or she could never have managed the transfer which had sent me into the Earth-world and brought out Edward Bond. But I thought I could deceive her or anyone these rebels had to offer me.

The small cave at the turn of the corridor was empty except for Freydis. Her back was to me. She crouched on her knees before a small fire that burned, apparently without fuel, in a dish of crystal. She wore a white robe, and her white hair lay in two heavy braids along her back. I stopped, trying to feel like Edward Bond again, to determine what he would have said in this moment. Then Freydis turned and rose.

She rose tremendously. Few in the Dark World can look me in the eye, but Freydis' clear blue gaze was level with my own. Her great shoulders and great, smooth arms were as powerful as a man's, and if age was upon her, it did not show in her easy motions or in the timeless face she turned to me. Only in the eyes was knowledge mirrored, and I knew as I met them that she was

old indeed.

"Good morning, Ganelon," she said in her deep, serene voice.

I gaped. She knew me as surely as if she read my mind. Yet I was sure, or nearly sure, that no one in the Dark World could do that. For a moment I almost stammered. Then pride came to my rescue.

"Good day, old woman," I said. "I come to offer you a chance for your life, if you obey me. We have a score to settle, you and I."

She smiled.

"Sit down, Covenanter," she said. "The last time we matched strength, you traded worlds. Would you like to visit Earth again, Lord Ganelon?"

It was my turn to laugh.

"You could not. And if you could, you wouldn't, after you hear me."

Her blue eyes searched mine.

"You want something desperately," she said in a slow voice. "Your very presence here, offering me terms, proves that. I never thought to see the Lord Ganelon face to face unless he was in chains or in a berserker battle-mood. Your need of me, Lord Ganelon, serves as chains for you now. You are fettered by your need, and helpless."

She turned back to the fire and sat down with graceful smoothness, her huge body under perfect control. Across the flame in its crystal bowl she faced me.

"Sit down, Ganelon," she said again, "and we will bargain, you and I. One thing first—do not waste my time with lies. I shall know if you tell the truth, Covenanter. Remember it."

I shrugged.

"Why should I bother with lies for such as you?" I said. "I have nothing to hide from you. The more of truth you know, the stronger you'll see my case is. First, though—those slaves who came in before me?"

SHE nodded toward the back of the cave. "I sent them into the inner mountain. They sleep. You know the heavy sleep that comes upon those loosed from the Spell, Lord Ganelon."

I sat down, shaking my head.

"No—no, that I can not quite remember. I—you asked for the truth, old woman. Listen to it, then. I am Ganelon, but the false memories of Edward Bond still blur my mind. As Edward Bond I came here— but Arles told me one thing that brought Ganelon back. She told me that the Coven, in my hour of weakness, had dressed me in the blue cloak of the sacrifice and I was riding for Caer Secaire when the woodsmen attacked us. Must I tell you now what my first wish in life is, witch-woman?"

"Revenge on the Coven." She said it hollowly, her eyes burning into mine through the fire. "This is the truth you speak, Covenanter. You want my help in getting your vengeance. What can you offer the woodsfolk in return, save fire and sword? Why should we trust you, Ganelon?"

Her agleless eyes burned into mine.

"Because of what you want. My desire is vengeance. Yours is—what?"

"The end of Llyr—the ruin of the Coven!" Her voice was resonant and her whole ageless face lighted as she spoke.

"So. I too desire the ruin of the Coven and the end—the end of Llyr." My tongue stumbled a little when I said that. I was not sure why. True, I had been sealed to Llyr in a great and terrible ceremony once—I could recall that much. But Llyr and I were not one. We might have been, had events run differently. I shuddered now at the thought of it.

Yes, it was Llyr's end I desired now—must desire, if I hoped to live.

Freydis looked at me keenly. She nodded.

"Yes—perhaps you do. Perhaps you do. What do you want of us then, Ganelon?"

I spoke hastily:

"I want you to swear to your people that I am Edward Bond. No—wait! I can do more for them now than Edward

Bond could do. Give thanks that I am Ganelon again, old woman! For only he can help you. Listen to me. Your foresters could not kill me. I know that. Ganelon is deathless, except on Llyr's altar. But they could fetter me and keep me prisoner here until you could work your spells again and bring Edward Bond back. And that would be foolish for your sake and for mine.

"Edward Bond has done all he knows for you. Now it's Ganelon's turn. Who else could tell you how Llyr is vulnerable, or where Matholch keeps his secret weapons, or how one can vanquish Edeyrn? These things I know—or I once knew. You must help me win my memories back, Freydis. After that—" I grinned fiercely.

She nodded. Then she sat quiet for awhile.

"What do you want me to do, then, Ganelon?" she asked, at last.

"Tell me first about the bridging of the worlds," I said eagerly. "How did you change Edward Bond and me?"

Freydis smiled grimly.

"Not so fast, Covenanter!" she answered. "I have my secrets too! I will answer only a part of that question. We wrought the change, as you must guess, simply to rid ourselves of you. You must remember how fiercely you were pressing us in your raids for slaves, in your hatred of our freedom. We are a proud people, Ganelon, and we would not be oppressed forever. But we knew there was no death for you except in a way we could not use.

"I knew of the twin world of Earth. I searched, and found Edward Bond. And after much striving, much effort, I wrought a certain transition that put you in the other world, with the memories of Edward Bond blotting out your own.

WE WERE rid of you. True, we had Edward Bond with us, and we did not trust him either. He was too like you. But him we could kill if we must. We did not. He is a strong man, Covenanter. We came to trust him and rely upon him. He brought us new ideas of warfare. He was a good leader. It was he who planned the attack upon the next Coven sacrifice—"

"An attack that failed," I said. "Or would have failed, had I not swung my weight into the balance. Edward Bond had Earth-knowledge, yes. But his weapons and defenses could only have breached the outer walls of the Coven. You know there are powers, seldom used, but powers that do not fail!"

"I know," she said. "Yes, I know, Ganelon. Yet we had to try, at least. And the Coven had been weakened by losing you. Without you none of the others would have dared call on Llyr, except perhaps Ghast Rhymi." She stared deeply into the fire. "I know you, Ganelon. I know the pride that burns in your soul. And I know, too, that vengeance, now, would be very dear to your heart. Yet you were sealed to Llyr, once, and you have been Cove-

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nanter since your birth. How do I know you can be trusted?"

I did not answer that. And, after a moment, Freydis turned toward the smoke-blackened wall. She twitched aside a curtain I had not seen. There, in an alcove, was a Symbol, a very ancient Sign, older than civilization, older than human speech.

Yes, Freydis would be one of the few who knew what that Symbol meant. As I knew.

"Now will you swear that you speak with a straight tongue?" she said.

I moved my hand in the ritual gesture that bound me irrevocably. This was an oath I could not break without being damned and doubly damned, in this world and the next. But I had no hesitation. I spoke truth!

"I will destroy the Coven!" I said.

"And Llyr?"

"I will bring an end to Llyr!"

But sweat stood out on my forehead as I said that. It was not easy.

FREYDIS twitched the curtain back into place. She seemed satisfied. "I have less doubt now," she said. "Well, Ganelon, the Norns weave strange threads together to make warp and woof of destiny. Yet there is a pattern, though sometimes we cannot see it. I did not ask you to swear fealty to the forest-folk."

"I realize that."

"You would not have sworn it," she said. "Nor is it necessary. After the Coven is broken, after an end is made to Llyr, I can guard the people of the woods against even you, Ganelon. And we may meet in battle then. But until then we are allies. I will name you—Edward Bond."

"I'll need more than that," I told her. "If the masquerade is to pass unchallenged."

"No one will doubt my word," Freydis said. Firelight flickered on her great frame, her smooth, ageless face.

"I cannot fight the Coven till I get back my memories. The memories of Ganelon. *All* of them."

She shook her head.

"Well," she said slowly, " I cannot do too much on that score. Something, yes. But writing on the mind is touchy work, and memories, once erased, are not easily brought back. You still have Edward Bond's memories?"

I nodded.

"But my own, no. They're fragmentary. I know, for example, that I was sealed to Llyr, but the details I don't remember."

"It would be as well, perhaps, to let that memory stay lost," Freydis said somberly. "But you are right. A dulled tool is no use. So listen."

Rock-still, boulder-huge, she stood across the fire from me. Her voice deepened.

"I sent you into the Earth-world. I brought your double, Edward Bond, here. He helped us, and—Arles loved him, after a while. Even Lorryn, who does not trust many, grew to trust Edward Bond."

"Who is Lorryn?"

"One of us now. Not always. Years ago he had his cottage in the forest; he hunted, and few were as cunning as Lorryn in the chase. His wife was very young. Well, she died. Lorryn came back to his cottage one night and found death there, and blood, and a wolf that snarled at him from a bloody muzzle. He fought the wolf; he did not kill it. You saw Lorryn's cheek. His whole body is like that, scarred and wealed from wolf-fangs."

"A wolf?" I said. Not—"

"A wolfling," Freydis said. "Lycanthrope, shape-changer. Matholch. Some day Lorryn will kill Matholch. He lives only for that."

"Let him have the red dog," I said contemptuously. "If he likes, I'll give him Matholch flayed!"

"Arles and Lorryn and Edward Bond have planned their campaign," Freydis said. "They swore that the last Sabbat had been celebrated in the Dark World. Edward Bond showed them new weap-

ons he remembered from Earth. Such weapons have been built and are in the arsenal, ready. No Sabbats have been held since Medea and her followers went searching to Earth; the woodsfolk held their hands. There was nothing to strike at except old Ghast Rhymi. Now Medea and the rest of the Coven are back, they're ready. If you lead against them, Ganelon, the Coven can be smashed, I think."

"The Coven has its own weapons," I muttered. "My memory fails—but I think Edeyrn has a power that—that—" I shook my head. "No, it's gone."

"How can Llyr be destroyed?" Freydis asked.

"I—I may have known once. Not now."

"Look at me," she said. And leaned forward, so that it seemed as though her ageless face was bathed in the fires.

Through the flames her gaze caught mine. Some ancient power kindled her clear blue eyes. Like pools of cool water under a bright sky—pools deep and unstirring, where one could sink into an azure silence forever and ever. . . .

As I looked the blue waters clouded, grew dark. I saw a great black dome against a black sky. I saw the thing that dwells deepest and most strongly in the mind of Ganelon—Caer Llyr!

The dome swam closer. It loomed above me. Its walls parted like dark water, and I moved in memory down the great smooth shining corridor that leads to Llyr Himself.

IX

ONWARD I moved. Faces flickered before me—Matholch's fierce grin, Edeyrn's cowled head with its glance that chilled, Medea's savage beauty that no man could ever forget, even in his hatred. They looked at me, mistrustfully. Their lips moved in soundless question. Curiously, I knew these were real faces I saw.

In the magic of Freydis' spell I was drifting through some dimensionless place where only the mind ventures, and I was meeting here the thoughts of the questing Coven, meeting the eyes of their minds. They knew me. They asked me fiercely a question I could not hear.

Death was in the face Matholch's mind turned to mine. All his hatred of me boiled furiously in his yellow wolf-eyes. His lips moved, almost I could hear him. Medea's features swam up before me, blotting out the shape-changer. Her red mouth framed a question—over and over.

"Ganelon, where are you? Ganelon, my lover, where are you? You must come back to us. Ganelon!"

Edeyrn's faceless head moved between Medea and me, and very distantly I heard her cool, small voice echoing the same thought,

"You must return to us, Ganelon. Return to us and die!"

Anger drew a red curtain between those faces and myself.

Traitors, betrayers, false to the Coven oath! How dared they threaten Ganelon, the strongest of them all? How dared they—and why?

Why?

My brain reeled with the query. And then I realized there was one face missing from the Coven. These three had been searching the thought-planes for me, but what of Ghast Rhymi?

Deliberately I groped for the contact of his mind.

I could not touch him. But I remembered. I remembered Ghast Rhymi, whose face Edward Bond had never seen. Old, old, old, beyond good and evil, beyond fear and hatred, this was Ghast Rhymi, the wisest of the Coven. If he willed, he would answer my groping thought. If he willed not, nothing could force him. Nothing could harm the Eldest, for he lived on only by force of his own will.

He could end himself instantly, by the power of a thought. And he is like a candle flame, flickering away as one grasps at him. Life holds nothing more

for him. He does not cling to it. If I had tried to seize him he could slip like fire or water from my grasp. He would as soon be dead as alive. But unless he must, he would not break his deep calm to think the thought that would change him into clay.

His mind and the image of his face remained hidden from my quest. He would not answer. The rest of the Coven still kept calling to me with a strange desperation in their minds—return and die, Lord Ganelon! But Ghast Rhymi did not care.

So I knew that it was at his command the death-sentence had been passed. And I knew I must seek him out and somehow force an answer from him—from Ghast Rhymi, upon whom all force was strengthless. Yet force him I must!

All this while my mind had been drifting effortlessly down the great hallway of Caer Llyr, borne upon that tide that flows deepest in the mind of Ganelon, the Chosen of Llyr—Ganelon, who must one day return to Him Who Waits—as I was returning now. . . .

A GOLDEN window glowed before me. I knew it for the window through which great Llyr looks out upon his world, the window through which he reaches for his sacrifices. And Llyr was hungry. I felt his hunger. Llyr was roaming the thought-planes too, and in the moment that I realized again where my mind was drifting, I felt suddenly the stir of a great reaching, a tentacular groping through the golden window.

Llyr had sensed my presence in the planes of his mind. He knew his Chosen. He stretched out his godlike grasp to fold me into that embrace from which there is no returning.

I heard the soundless cry of Medea, vanishing like a puff of smoke out of the thought-plane as she blanked her mind defensively from the terror. I heard Matholch's voiceless howl of pure fear as he closed his own mind.

There was no sound from Edeyrn, but she was gone as utterly as if she had never thought a thought. I knew the three of them sat somewhere in their castle, eyes and minds closed tightly, willing themselves to blankness as Llyr roamed the thought lanes seeking the food he had been denied so long.

A part of me shared the terror of the Coven. But a part of me remembered Llyr. For an instant, almost, I recaptured the dark ecstasy of that moment when Llyr and I were one, and the memory of horror and of dreadful joy came back, the memory of a power transcending all earthly things.

This was mine for the taking, if I opened my mind to Llyr. Only one man in a generation is sealed to Llyr, sharing in his godhead, exulting with him in the ecstasy of human sacrifice—and I was that one man if I chose to complete the ceremony that would make me Llyr's. If I chose, if I dared—ah!

The memory of anger came back. I must not release myself into that promised joy. I had sworn to put an end to Llyr. I had sworn by the Sign to finish the Coven and Llyr. Slowly, reluctantly, my mind pulled itself back from the fringing contact of those tentacles.

The moment that tentative contact was broken, a full tide of horror washed over me. Almost I had touched—*him*. Almost I had let myself be defiled beyond all human understanding by the terrible touch of—of—there is no word in any language for the thing that was Llyr. But I understood what had been in my mind as Edward Bond when I realized that to dwell on the same soil as Llyr, share the same life, was a defilement that made earth and life too terrible to endure -if one knew Llyr.

I must put an end to *him*. In that moment, I knew I must stand up and face the being we knew as Llyr and fight him to his end. No human creature had ever fully faced him—not even his sacrifices, not even his Chosen. But his slayer would have to face him, and I had sworn to be his slayer.

Shuddering, I drew back from the

black depths of Caer Llyr, struggled to the surface of that still blue pool of thought which had been Freydis' eyes. The darkness ebbed around me and by degrees the walls of the cave came back, the fuelless flame, the great smooth-limbed sorceress who held my mind in the motionless deeps of her spell.

As I returned to awareness, slowly, slowly, knowledge darted through my mind in lightening-flashes, too swiftly to shape into words.

I knew, I remembered.

GANELON'S life came back in pictures that went vividly by and were printed forever on my brain. I knew his powers; I knew his secret strengths, his hidden weaknesses. I knew his sins. I exulted in his power and pride. I returned to my own identity and was fully Ganelon again. Or almost fully.

But there were still hidden things. Too much had been erased from my memory to come back in one full tide. There were gaps, and important gaps, in what I could recall.

The blue darkness cleared. I looked into Freydis' clear gaze across the fire. I smiled, feeling a cold and arrogant confidence welling up in me.

"You have done well, witch-woman," I told her.

"You remember?"

"Enough. Yes, enough." I laughed. "There are two trials before me, and the first is the easier of the two, and it is impossible. But I shall accomplish it."

"Ghast Rhymi?" she asked in a quiet voice.

"How do you know that?"

"I know the Coven. And I think, but I am not sure, that in Ghast Rhymi's hands lie the secrets of the Coven and of Llyr. But no man can force Ghast Rhymi to do his bidding."

"I'll find the way. Yes, I will even tell you what my next task is. You shall have the truth as I just learned it, witch. Do you know of the Mask and Wand?"

Her eyes on mine, she shook her head. "Tell me. Perhaps I can help."

I laughed again. It was so fantastically implausible that she and I should stand here, sworn enemies of enemy clans, planning a single purpose together! Yet there was only a little I hid from her that day, and I think not very much that Freydis hid from me.

"In the palace of Medea, is a crystal mask and the silver Wand of Power," I told her. "What that Wand is I do not quite remember—yet. But when I find it, my hands will know. And with it I can overcome Medea and Matholch and all their powers. As for Edeyrn—well, this much I know. The Mask will save me from her."

I hestitated.

Medea I knew now. I knew the strange hungers and the stranger thirsts that drove the beautiful red and white witch to her trystings. I knew now, and shuddered a little to think of it, why she took her captives with those arrows of fire that did not kill at all, but only stunned them.

In the Dark World, my world, mutation has played strange changes upon flesh that began as human. Medea was one of the strangest of all. There is no word in Earth-tongues for it, because no creature such as Medea ever walked Earth. But there is an approximation. In reality perhaps, and certainly in legend, beings a little like her have been known on Earth. The name they give them is Vampire.

But Edeyrn, no. I could not remember. It may be that not even Ganelon had ever known. I only knew that in time of need, Edeyrn would uncover her face.

"Freydis," I said, and hesitated again. "What is Edeyrn?"

She shook her massive head, the white braids stirred on her shoulders.

"I have never known. I have only probed at her mind now and then, when we met as you met her today, on the thought-lanes. I have much power, Ganelon, but I have always drawn back from the chill I sensed beneath Edeyrn's hood. No, I cannot tell you what she is."

I laughed again. Recklessness was upon me now.

"Forget Edeyrn," I said. "When I have forced Ghast Rhymi to my bidding, and faced Llyr with the weapon that will end him, what shall I fear of Edeyrn? The Crystal Mask is a talisman against her. That much I know. Let her be whatever monstrous thing she wills—Ganelon has no fear of her."

"There is a weapon, then, against Llyr too?"

"There is a sword," I said. "A sword that is—is not quite a sword as we think of weapons. My mind is cloudy there still. But I know that Ghast Rhymi can tell me where it is. A weapon, yet not a weapon, The Sword Called Llyr."

FOR an instant, as I spoke that name, it seemed to me that the fire between us flickered as if a shadow had passed across its brightness. I should not have called the name aloud. An echo of it had gone ringing across the realms of thought, and in Caer Llyr perhaps Llyr Himself had stirred behind the golden window—stirred, and looked out.

Even here, I felt a faint flicker of hunger from that far-away domed place. And suddenly, I knew what I had done. *Llyr was awake!*

I stared at Freydis with widened eyes, meeting her blue gaze that was widening too. She must have felt the stir as it ran formlessly all through the Dark World. In the Castle of Coven I knew they had felt it too, perhaps that they looked at one another with the same instant dread which flashed between Freydis and me here.

Llyr was awake!

And I had awakened him. I had gone drifting in thought down that shining corridor and stood in thought before the very window itself, Llyr's Chosen, facing Llyr's living window. No wonder he had stirred at last to full awakening.

Exultation bubbled up in my mind.

"Now they must move!" I told Freydis joyfully. "You wrought better than you knew when you set my mind free to rove its old track. Llyr wakens and is hungrier than the Coven ever dared let him grow before. For overlong there has been no Sabbat, and Llyr ravens for his sacrifice. Have you spies watching the Castle now, witch-woman?"

She nodded.

"Good. Then we will know when the slaves are gathered again for the Sabbat meeting. It will be soon. It must be soon! And Edward Bond will lead an assault upon the Castle while the Coven are at Sabbat in Caer Secaire. There will be the Mask and the Wand, old woman!" My voice deepened to a chant of triumph. "The Mask and the Wand for Ganelon, and Ghast Rhymi alone in the Castle to answer me if he can! The Norns fight on our side, Freydis!"

She looked at me long and without speaking.

Then a grim smile broke across her face and stooping, she spread her bare hand, palm down, upon the fuelless flame. I saw the fire lick up around her fingers. Deliberately she crushed it out beneath her hand, not flinching at all.

The fire flared and died away. The crystal dish stood empty upon its pedestal, and dimness closed around us. In that twilight the woman was a great figure of marble, towering beside me.

I heard her deep voice.

"The Norn are with us, Ganelon," she echoed. "See that you fight upon our side too, as far as your oath will take you. Or you must answer to the gods and to me. And by the gods—" she laughed harshly—"by the gods, if you betray me, I swear I'll smash you with no other power than this!"

In the dimness I saw her lift her great arms. We looked one another in the eye, this mighty sorceress and I, and I was not sure but that she could overcome me in single combat if the need arose. By magic and by sheer muscle, I recognized an equal. I bent my head.

"So be it, sorceress," I said, and we clasped hands there in the darkness. And almost I hoped I need not have to betray her.

Side by side, we went down the corridor to the cave mouth.

The half-circle of foresters still awaited us, Arles and the scarred Lorryn stood a little forward, lifting their heads eagerly as we emerged. I paused, catching the quiver of motion as calloused hands slipped stealthily toward hilt and bowstring. Panic, subdued and breathless, swept around the arc of woodsfolk.

I stood there savoring the moment of terror among them, knowing myself Ganelon and the nemesis that would bring harsh justice upon them all, in my own time. In my own good time.

But first I needed their help.

At my shoulder the deep voice of Freydis boomed through the glade.

"I have looked upon this man," she said. "I name him—Edward Bond."

Distrust of me fell away from them; Freydis' words reassured them.

X

NOW the sap that runs through Ygdrasill-root stirred from its wintry sluggishness, and the inhuman guardians of the fate-tree roused to serve me. The three Norns—the Destiny-weavers—I prayed to them!

Urdur who rules the past!

She whispered of the Covenanters, and their powers and their weaknesses; of Matholch, the wolfling, whose berserk rages were his great flaw, the gap in his armor through which I could strike, when fury had drowned his wary cunning; of the red witch and the Edeyrn—and of old Ghast Rhymi. My enemies. Enemies whom I could destroy, with the aid of certain talismans that I had remembered now. Whom I would destroy!

Verdandi who rules the present!

Edward Bond had done his best. In the caves the rebels had showed me were weapons, crude rifles and grenades, gasbombs and even a few makeshift flamethrowers. They would be useful against the Coven's slaves. How useless they would be against the Covenanters I alone knew. Though Freydis may have known too.

Yet Arles and Lorryn and their reckless followers were ready to use those Earth-weapons, very strange to them, in a desperate attack on the Castle. And I would give them that chance, as soon as our spies brought word of Sabbat-preparations. It would be soon. It would have to be soon. For Llyr was awake now—hungry, thirsting—beyond the Golden Window that is his door into the worlds of mankind.

Skuld who rules the future!

To Skuld I prayed most of all. I thought that the Coven would ride again to Caer Secaire before another dawn came. By then I wanted the rebels ready.

Edward Bond had trained them well. There was military discipline, after a fashion. Each man knew his equipment thoroughly, and all were expert woodsmen. We laid our plans, Arles and Lorryn and I—though I did not tell them everything I intended—and group by group, the rebels slipped away into the forest, bound for the Castle.

They would not attack. They would not reveal themselves until the signal was given. Meantime, they would wait, concealed in the gulleys and scrubwoods around the Castle. But they would be ready. When the time came, they would ride down to the great gates. Their grenades would be helpful there.

Nor did it seem fantastic that we should battle magic with grenades and rifle. For I was beginning to realize more and more, as my lost memory slowly returned, that the Dark World was not ruled by laws of pure sorcery. To an Earth-mind such creatures as Matholch and Medea would have seemed supernatural, but I had a double mind, for as Ganelon I could use the memories of Edward Bond as a workman uses tools.

I had forgotten nothing I had ever known about Earth. And by applying logic to the Dark World, I understood things I had taken for granted.

THE mutations gave the key. There are depths in the human mind forever unplumbed, potentialities for power as there are lost, atrophied senses—the ancient third eye that is the pineal gland. And the human organism is the most specialized thing of flesh that exists.

Any beast of prey is better armed with fang and claw. Man has only his brain. But as carnivores grew longer, more deadly talons, so man's mind developed correspondingly. Even in the Earth-world there are mediums, mind-readers, psychomantic experts, ESP specialists. In the Dark World the mutations had run wild, producing cosmic aberrations for which there might be no real need for another million years.

And such minds, with their new powers, would develop tools for those powers. The wands. Though no technician, I could understand their principle. Science tends toward simpler mechanisms; the klystron and the magnetron are little more than metal bars. Yet, under the right conditions, given enemy and direction, they are powerful machines.

Well, the wands tapped the tremendous electromagnetic energy of the planet, which is, after all, simply a gargantuan magnet. As for the directive impulse, trained minds could easily supply that.

Whether or not Matholch actually changed to wolf-form I did not know, though I did not think he did. Hypnosis was part of the answer. An angry cat will fluff out its fur and seem double its size. A cobra will, in effect, hypnotize its prey. Why? In order to break down the enemy's defenses, to disarm him, to weaken the single-purposiveness that is so vital in combat. No, perhaps Matholch did not turn into a wolf, but those under the spell of his hypnosis thought he did, which came to the same thing in the end.

Medea? There was a parallel. There are diseases in which blood transfusions are periodically necessary. Not that Medea drank blood; she had other thirsts. But vital nervous energy is as real a thing as a leucocyte, and, witch though she was, she did not need magic to serve her needs.

Of Edeyrn I was not so sure. Some stray remembrances hung like mists in my mind. Once I had known what she was, what chilling power lay hidden in the darkness of her cowl. And that was not magic either. The Crystal Mask would protect me against Edeyrn, but I knew no more than that.

Even Llyr—*even Llyr!* He was no god. That I knew well. Yet what he might be was something I could not even guess at as yet. Eventually I meant to find out, and the Sword Called Llyr, which was not a true sword, would aid me then.

MEANWHILE, I had my part to play Even with Freydis as my sponsor, I could not afford to rouse suspicion among the rebels. I had explained that Medea's drug had left me weak and shaken. That helped to explain any minor lapses I might make. Curiously, Lorryn seemed to have accepted me fully at Freydis' word, while in Arles' behavior I detected a faint, almost imperceptible reserve. I do not think that she suspected the truth. Or, if she did, she was trying not to admit it, even in her own mind.

And I could not afford to let that suspicion grow.

The valley was very active now.

Much had happened since I came there in the dawn. I had been through enough exertion both physical and emotional to last an ordinary man for a week, but Ganelon had only begun his battle. It was thanks to Edward Bond that our plans for attack could be formulated so readily, and in a way I was glad I had been too busy for anything but the most impersonal planning with Arles and Lorryn.

It helped to cover the great gaps of my ignorance about things Edward Bond should know. Many times I angled craftily for information; many times I had to call upon the excuse of the mythi-

cal drug and upon the exhaustion of my ordeal at the Castle. But by the time our plans were laid, it seemed to me that even Arles' suspicions were partly lulled.

I knew I must lull them utterly.

We rose from the great map-table in the council-cavern. All of us were tired. I met Lorryn's scar-twisted grin, warmth in it now as he smiled at the man he thought his sworn friend, and I made Edward Bond's face smile back at him.

"We'll do it this time," I told him confidently. "This time we'll win!"

His smile twisted suddenly into a grimace, and the lightlike embers glowed in his deep eyes.

"Remember," he growled. "Matholch —for me!"

I looked down at the relief-map of the table, very skillfully made under Edward Bond's directions.

The dark green hills rolling with their strange forests of semi-animate trees, every brook traced in white plaster, every roadway marked. I laid my hand on the little mound of towers that was a miniature Castle of the Coven. From it stretched the highway I had ridden last night, beside Medea, in my blue sacrificial robe. There was the valley and the windowless tower of Caer Secaire which had been our destination.

For a moment I rode that highway again, in the darkness and the starshine, seeing Medea beside me in her scarlet cloak, her face a pale oval in the dusk, her mouth black-red, her eyes shining at me. I remembered the feel of that fiercely yielding body in my arms as I had held her last night, as I had held her so many times before. In my mind whirled a question.

Medea, Medea, red witch of Colchis, why did you betray me?

I ground my palm down on the tiny plaster towers of the Castle, feeling them powder away beneath my hand. I grinned fiercely at the ruin I had made of Edward Bond's model.

"We'll have no need for *this* again!" I said through my teeth.

Lorryn laughed.

"No need to repair it. Tomorrow the Coven Castle will be wreckage too!"

I dusted the powdered plaster from my hand and looked across the table at the silent Arles. She looked at me gravely, waiting. I smiled.

"We haven't had a moment alone together," I said, making my voice tender. "I'll need sleep before I leave tonight, but there's time for a walk, if you'll come with me."

The grave green gaze dwelt upon mine. Then she nodded, without smiling, and came around the table, stretching out her hand to me. I took it and we went down the steps to the cave-mouth, and out into the glen, neither of us speaking. I let her lead the way, and we walked in silence toward the upper end of the valley, the little stream tinkling away beside us.

Arles walked very lightly, her gossamer hair floating behind her in a pale misty veil. I wondered if it was by intent that she kept her free hand resting upon the holstered weapon at her side.

IT WAS hard for me to keep my mind upon her, or to care whether or not she knew me for myself. Medea's face in all its beauty and its evil floated before me up the glen, a face no man who looked upon it could ever forget. For a moment I was angry at the recollection that Edward Bond, in my flesh, had taken last night the kisses she meant for Ganelon.

Well, I would see her again tonight, before she died by my hand!

In my mind I saw the tiny roadway of the map-table, winding down from Coven Castle to the sacrificial temple. Along the real road, sometime in the night to come, I knew the cavalcade would ride again as it had ridden with me last night. And again there would be forest men hiding along the road, and again I would lead them against the Coven. But this time the outcome would be very different from anything either the rebels or the

Coven could expect.

What a strange web the Norns had woven! Last night as Edward Bond, tonight as Ganelon, I would lead the same men in the same combat against the same foe, but with a purpose as different as night and day.

The two of us, deadly enemies though we shared the same body in a strange, inverted way—enemies though we had never met and never could meet, for all our common flesh. It was an enigma too curious to unravel.

"Edward," a voice said at my shoulder. I look down. Arles was facing me me with the same enigmatic gaze I had met so often today. "Edward, is she very beautiful?"

I stared at her.

"Who?"

"The witch. The Coven witch. Medea."

I almost laughed aloud. Was this the answer to all her aloofness of the day? Did she think my own withdrawal, all the changes she sensed in me, were due to the charms of a rival beauty? Well, I must set her mind at rest about that, at any rate. I called upon Llyr to forgive me the lie, and I took her shoulders in my hands and said:

"There is no woman in this world or on Earth half so beautiful as you, my darling."

Still she looked up at me gravely.

"When you mean that, Edward, I'll be glad," she said. "You don't mean it now. I can tell. No." She put her fingers across my mouth as I began to protest. "Let's not talk about her now. She's a sorceress. She has powers neither of us can fight. It isn't your fault or mine that she's too beautiful to forget all in a moment. Never mind now. Look! Do you remember this place?"

She twisted deftly from my grasp and swept out a hand toward the panorama spread below us. We stood in a grove of tall, quivering trees high on the crest of the low mountain. The leaves and branches made a bower around us with their showers of shaking tendrils, but through an opening here and there we could see the rolling country far below us, glowing in the light of the red westering sun.

"This will be ours some day," said Arles softly. "After the Coven is gone, after Llyr has vanished. We'll be free to live above ground, clear the forests, build our cities—live like men again. Think of it, Edward, it will be because of you and Freydis. We would all have been lost without you."

She turned suddenly, her pale gold hair flying out around her face like a halo of floating gauze, and she smiled at me with a sudden, bewitching charm I had never seen upon her face before.

UNTIL now she had always turned a grave reserve to my advances. Now suddenly I saw her as Edward Bond had, and it came to me in a flash of surprise that Bond was a very fortunate man, after all. Medea's sultry scarlet beauty would never wholly vanish from my mind, I knew, but Arles had a delicate and delightful charm of her own.

She was very near me, her lips parted as she smiled up into my face. For an instant I envied Edward Bond. Then I remembered. I *was* Edward Bond! But it was Ganelon who stopped suddenly and seized the forest girl in a fierce embrace and startled her. I felt her gasp of surprise against my breast and her stir of protest in the moment before my lips touched hers.

Then she protested no longer.

She was a strange, wild, shy little creature, very pleasant in my arms, very sweet to kiss. I knew by the way she responded to me that Edward Bond never held her like this. But then Edward Bond was a weakling and a fool. And before the kiss had ended I knew where I would turn first for solace when Medea had paid for her treachery with her life. I would not forget Medea, but I could not soon forget this kiss of Arles', either.

She clung to me in silence for a moment, her gossamer hair floating like thistledown about us both, and above

her head I looked out over the valley which she had seen in her mind's eyes peopled with free forest folk, dotted with their cities. I knew that dream would never come true.

But I had a dream of my own!

I saw the forest people toiling to raise my mighty castle here—perhaps on this very mountaintop—a castle to dominate the whole countryside and the lands beyond it! I saw them laboring under my overseers to conquer still further lands. I saw my armies marching, my slaves in my fields and mines, my navies on the dark oceans of a world that might well be mine.

Arles should share it with me—for a while. For a little while.

"I will always love you!" I said at her ear in the voice of Edward Bond. But it was Ganelon's lips that found her lips in the one last ardent kiss I had time for then.

Curious, it seemed to me, that it took Ganelon's kisses to convince her at last that I was Edward Bond. . . .

After that, for a few hours I slept, snug in Edward Bond's cavern rooms, in his comfortable bed, his guards watching beside the door. I slept with the memory of his sweet forest girl in my arms, and the prospect of his kingdom and his bride before me when I woke. I think in the Earth-world, Edward Bond must have dreamed jealous dreams.

But my own dreams were bad. Llyr in his castle was awake and hungry, and the great, cold, writhing tendrils of his hunger coiled lazily through my mind as I slept. I knew they stirred through every mind in the Dark World that had senses to perceive them. I knew I must wake soon, or never. But first I must sleep and grow strong for the night's ordeal. Resolutely I shut Llyr from my thoughts, and resolutely I shut away Arles.

It was Medea's red smile and sidelong sultry glance that went down with me into the caverns of slumber, and stayed with me there.

XI

QUIETLY Lorryn and I crouched among the trees and looked out at the Castle of the Coven, aglitter with lights against the starry sky. This was the night! We both knew it, and we were both tense and sweating with a nervous exultation that made this waiting hard indeed.

All around us in the woods, unseen, we heard the tiny sounds that meant an army of forest people waited for our signal. And this time they were here in force. I caught a glint of starlight now and then on rifle-barrels, and I knew that the rebels were armed to put up a good fight against the soldiers of the Coven.

Not, perhaps, too good a fight.

I did not care. They thought they were going to storm the Castle and the Coven by sheer force of arms. I knew their only purpose was to divert attention while I made my way into the Castle and found the secret weapons that would give me power over the Convenanters. While they were striking, I would make my way to Ghast Rhymi and learn what was essential for me to learn.

After that, I did not care. Many foresters would die. Let them! There would still be slaves aplenty for me when my hour came. And nothing could stop me now. The Norns fought with me; I could not fail . . . .

There was much activity within the Castle. Voices floated out to us in the still night air. Figures moved to and fro against the lights. Then great gates were flung open upon a burst of golden radiance and the outlines of many riders crowded against it. A procession was coming out.

I heard chains clash musically, and I understood. This time the sacrifices rode chained to their mounts, so that no siren voices from the wood could lure them away. I shrugged. Let them go to their death, then. Llyr must be fed while he lasted. Better these then Ganelon, of-

fered at the Golden Window. We saw them go off down the dark road, their chains ringing.

That was Matholch—there on the tall horse. I knew his vulpine outlines, the lift of the cloak upon his shoulders. And I would have known him too because of the great start, quickly checked, that Lorryn made beside me. I heard the breath whistle through his nostrils, and his voice grated in my ear.

"Remember! That is mine!"

Edeyrn went by, tiny on her small mount, and a breath of chill seemed to me to sweep the darkness as she passed.

Medea came!

When I could no longer make out her outlines in the distance, when her white robe was no more than a shimmer and her scarlet cloak had melted into the dark, I turned to Lorryn, my mind spinning, my plans already chaotic with change. For a new compulsion had come upon me, and I was not even trying to resist it.

I had not seen a sacrific in Caer Secaire. This was one of the blank places in my memory, and a dangerous blank. Until Ganelon remembered the Sabbat, until he watched Llyr accept the offerings through the Golden Window, he could not wholly trust himself to fight the Coven and Llyr. This was a gap that must be filled. And curiosity was suddenly very strong upon me. Curiosity—and could it be—the pull of Llyr?

"Lorryn, wait for me here," I whispered in the darkness. "We've got to make sure they enter Caer Secaire, start the Sabbat. I don't want to attack until I'm sure. Wait for me."

He stirred protestingly, but I was away before he could speak. I was out upon the road and running softly and silently after that processional winding toward the valley and the Mass of St. Secaire, which is the Black Mass. It seemed to me as I ran that the fragrance of Medea's perfume hung upon the air I breathed, and my throat choked with the passion of my hatred for her, and of my love.

"She shall be the first to die," I promised myself in the dark . . . .

I WATCHED the great iron doors of Caer Secaire swing shut upon the last of the procession. The Caer was dark inside. They went quietly in, one by one, and vanished into the deeper night within. The doors clanged resonantly after them.

Some memory of Ganelon's, buried beneath the surface of conscious thought, urged me to the left, around the curve of the great wall. I followed the impulse obediently, moving like a sleep-walker toward a goal I did not know. Memory took me close under the looming rampart, made me lay my hands on its surface. There were heavy scrollings of pattern there, writhing like tendrils over the dark walls. My remembering fingers traced the curves, though my mind still wondered.

Then the wall moved beneath my hands. The scroll-work had been a key of sorts, and a door sank open in the blackness before me. I went confidently forward, out of black night, through a black door into deeper blackness within. But my feet knew the way.

A stairway rose beneath me in the dark. My feet had expected it and I did not stumble. It was very curious to move so blindly through this strange and dangerous place, not knowing where or why I moved, yet trusting my body to find the way. The stairs wound up and up.

Llyr was here. I could feel his hungry presence like a pressure on the mind, but many times intensified because of the narrow spaces within these walls, as if he were a sound of thunder reverberating again and again from the enclosed spaces of the Caer. Something within me reverberated soundlessly in answer, a roar of exultation that I quickly suppressed.

Llyr and I were no longer linked by that ceremony of long ago. I repudiated it. I was not Llyr's Chosen now. But within me a sense I could not control

quivered with ecstacy at the thought of those sacrifices who had filed blindly through the great doors of Caer Secaire. And I wondered if the Coven—if Medea—thought of me now, who had so nearly stood within the sacrifices last night.

My feet paused upon the stairs. I could see nothing, but I knew that before me was a wall carved with scroll-patterns. My hands found it, traced the raised designs. A section of darkness slid sidewise and I was leaning upon a wide ledge, looking down, very far down.

Caer Secaire was like a mighty grove of columns whose capitals soared up and up into infinite darkness. Somewhere above, too high for me to see its source, a light was beginning to glow. My heart paused when I saw it, for I knew that light—that golden radiance from a Golden Window.

Memory came fitfully back to me. The Window of Llyr. The Window of the Sacrifice. I could not see it, but my mind's eye remembered its glow. In Caer Llyr that Window's substance shone eternally, and Llyr Himself lolled behind it, far behind it—forever. But in Caer Secaire and in the other temples of sacrifice that had once dotted the Dark World, there were replicas of the window which glowed only when Llyr came bodilessly through the dark to take his due.

Above us, hovering and hungry, Llyr was dawning now in that golden radiance, like a sun in the night time of the temple. Where the Window of Secaire was located, how it was shaped, I still could not remember. But something in me knew that golden light and shivered in response as I watched its brilliance strengthen through the columns of the temple.

FAR below me I saw the Coven standing, tiny figures foreshortened to wedges of colored cloak—green-robed Matholch, yellow-robed Edeyrn, red Medea. Behind them stood a circle of guardsmen. Before them, as I watched the last of the Chosen slaves moved blindly away among the columns. I could not see where they were going, but in essence I knew. The Window was yawning for its sacrifices, and somehow they must make their way to it.

As the light broadened, I saw that before the Coven stood a great cup-shaped altar, black on a black dais. Above it a lipped spout hung. My eyes traced the course of the trough which ended in the spout, and I saw now that there was a winding, descending curve, dark against that growing light, which came down in a great sweep from the mysterious heights overhead, stretching from—the window?—to the cupped altar. A stir deep within me told me what that trough was for. I leaned upon the sill, shaking with an anticipation that was half for myself and half for Him who hovered above us in the sun-like dawning of golden light.

Thinly from below me rose a chant. I knew Medea's voice, clear and silver, a thread of sound in the dimness and the silence. It rose like incense, quivering among the mighty, topless columns of Secaire.

A tenseness of waiting grew and grew in the dim air of the temple. The figures below me stood motionless, heads lifted, watching the dawning light. Medea's voice chanted on and on.

Time paused there in the columned grove of Secaire, while Llyr hovered above us waiting for his prey.

Then a thin and terrible cry rang out from the heights overhead. One scream. The light shot out blindingly in a great burst of exultation, like a voiceless answering cry from Llyr Himself. Medea's chant rose to a piercing climax and paused.

There was a stir among the columns; something moved along that curve of trough. My eyes sought the altar and the lipped spout above it.

The Coven was rigid, a cluster of frozen figures, waiting.

Blood began to drip from the spout.

I do not know how long I hung there on the ledge, my eyes riveted to the

altar. I do not know how many times I heard a cry ring out from above, how many times Medea's chant rose to a hungry climax as the light burst forth in a glory overhead and blood gushed into the great cup of the altar. I was deaf and blind to everything but this. I was half with Llyr at his Golden Window, shaken with ecstacy as he took his sacrifices, and half with the Coven below, glorying in their share of the ceremony of the Sabbat.

But I know I waited too long.

WHAT saved me I do not know now. Some voice of the ego crying unheard in my mind that this was time dangerously spent, that I must be elsewhere before the Sabbat ended, that Lorryn and his men waited endlessly while I hung here battening like a glutton upon Llyr's feast.

Awareness returned to my mind. With an infinite effort I pulled myself back from the brink of that Golden Window and stood reeling in the darkness, but in my own body again, not hovering mindlessly with Llyr in the heights above. The Coven was still tense below me, gripped in the ecstasy of the sacrifice. But for how long I could not be sure. Perhaps for the rest of the night; perhaps for only an hour. I must hurry, if hurrying were not already futile. There was no way to know.

So I went back in the darkness, down the unseen stairs, and out of the dark, unseen door, and back along the road to Coven Castle, my mind still reeling with remembered ecstasy, the glow of the Window still before my dazzled eyes, and the scarlet runnel above the altar, and the thin, sweet chanting of Medea louder in my ears than the sound of my own feet upon the road. . . .

The red moon was far down the sky when I came back to Lorryn, still crouching beside the castle wall and half mad with impatience. There was an eager stir among the unseen soldiers as I came running down the road, a forward surge as if they had waited to the very limit of endurance and would attack now whether I gave the word or not.

I waved to Lorryn while I was twenty feet away. I was careless now of the Castle guardsmen. Let them see me. Let them hear.

"Give the signal!" I shouted to Lorryn. "Attack!"

I saw him start up beside the road, and the moonlight glinted upon the silver horn he lifted to his lips. Its blare of signal notes ripped the night to tatters. It ripped away the last of my lethargy too.

I heard the long yell that swept the forest as the woodsmen surged forward to the attack, and my own voice roared unbidden in reply, an ecstasy of battle-hunger that matched the ecstasy I had just shared with Llyr.

The rattle of rifle-fire drowned out our voices. The first explosions of grenades shook the Castle, outlining the outer walls in livid detail. There were shouts from within, wild trumpetings of signal horns; the cries of confused guardsmen, leaderless and afrajd. But I knew they would rally. They had been trained well enough by Matholch and by myself. And they had weapons that could give the woodsmen a stiff fight.

When they recovered from this panic there would be much blood spilled around the outer walls.

I did not wait to see it. The first explosions had breached the barriers close beside me, and I scrambled recklessly through the gap, careless of the rifle fire that spattered against the stones. The Norns were with me tonight. I bore a charmed life, and I knew I could not fail.

Somewhere above me in the besieged towers Ghast Rhymi sat wrapped in his chill indifference, aloof as a god above the struggle around Coven Castle. I had a rendezvous with Ghast Rymi, though he did not know it yet.

I plunged into the gateway of the Castle, heedless of the milling guards. They did not know me in the darkness and the confusion, but they knew by

my tunic I was not a forester, and they let me shoulder them aside.

Three steps at a time, I ran up the great stairway.

XII

CASTLE of the Coven! How strange it looked to me as I went striding through its halls. Familiar, yet curiously unknown, as though I saw it through the veil of Edward Bond's transplanted memories.

So long as I went rapidly, I seemed to know the way. But if I hesitated, my conscious mind took over control, and that mind was still clouded with artificial memories, so that I became confused in the halls and corridors which were familiar to me when I did not think directly of them.

It was as if whatever I focused on sharply receded into unfamiliarity while everything else remained clear, until I thought it.

I strode down hallways arched overhead and paved underfoot in bright, intricate mosaics that told legendary tales half-familiar to me. I walked upon centaurs and satyrs whose very faces were well known to the Ganelon half of my mind, while the Edward Bond half wondered in vain whether such people had really lived in this distorted world of mutations.

This double mind at times was a source of strength to me, and at others a source of devouring weakness. Just now I hoped fervently that I might meet no delays, for once I lost this rushing thread of memory which was leading me toward Ghast Rhymi, I might never find it again. Any interruption might be fatal to my plans.

Ghast Rhymi, my memories told me, would be somewhere in the highest tower of the castle. There too would be the treasure-room where the Mask and the Wand lay hidden, and hidden deeper in the serene, untouchable thoughts of Ghast Rhymi, lay the secret of Llyr's vulnerability.

These three things I must have, and the getting would not be easy. For I knew — without clearly remembering how or by what—that the treasure-room was guarded by Ghast Rhymi. The Coven would not have left open to all comers that secret place where the things that could end them lay hidden.

Even I, even Ganelon, had a secret thing locked in that treasury. For no Covenanter, no warlock, nor sorceress can deal in the dark powers without creating, himself, the one instrument that can destroy him. That is the Law.

There are secrets behind it of which I may not speak, but the common one is clear. All Earth's folklore is rife with the same legend. Powerful men and women must focus their power in an object detached from themselves.

The myth of the external soul is common to all Earth races, but the reason for it lies deep in the lore of the Dark World. This much I can say—that there must be a balance in all things. For every negative, a positive. We of the Coven could not build up our power without creating a corresponding weakness somewhere, somehow, and we must hide that weakness so cunningly that no enemy could find it.

Not even the Coven knew wherein my own secret lay. I knew Medea's, and I Edeyrn's only partially, and as for Matholch—well, against him I needed only my own Covenanter strength. Ghast Rhymi did not matter. He would not bother to fight.

But Llyr? Ah!

SOMEWHERE the Sword lay hidden, and he who could find it and use it in that unknown way for which it was fashioned, he held the existence of Llyr in his own hand. But there was danger. For as Llyr's power in the Dark World was beyond imagination, so too must be that balancing power hidden in the Sword. Even to go near it might be fatally dangerous. To hold it in the hand—well, hold it I must, and there

was no profit in thinking about danger.

I went up and up, on and on.

I could not hear the sounds of battle. But I knew that at the gate the Coven guards and slaves were fighting and falling, as Lorryn's men, too, were falling. I had warned Lorryn that none must break through his lines to warn those at Caer Secaire. I knew that he would follow that order, despite his anxiety to come to grips with Matholch. For the rest, there was one in the Castle who could, without stirring, send a message to Medea. One person!

He had not sent that message. I knew that as I thrust through the white curtain and came out into the tower room. The little chamber was semi-circular, walls, floor and ceiling were ivory pale. The casement windows were shut, but Ghast Rhymi had never needed sight to send out his vision.

He sat there, an old, old man, relaxed amid the cushions of his seat, snowy hair and beard falling in curled ringlets that blended with his white, plain robe. His hands lay upon the chair-arms, pale as wax, so transparent that I could almost trace the course of the thinned blood that stirred so feebly in those old veins.

Wick and wax had burned down. The flame of life flickered softly, and a wind might send that flame into eternal darkness. So sat the Ancient of Days, his blind blue gaze not seeing me, but turned upon inward things.

Ganelon's memories flooded back. Ganelon had learned much from Ghast Rhymi. Even then, the Covenanter had been old. Now the tides of time had worn him, as the tides of the sea wear a stone till nothing is left but a thin shell, translucent as clouded glass. Within Ghast Rhymi I could see the life-fires dwindling, sunk to embers, almost ash.

He did not see me. Not easily can Ghast Rhymi be drawn back from the deeps where his thoughts move.

I spoke to him, but he did not answer.

I went past him then, warily, toward the wall that divided the tower-top into two halves. There was no sign of a door, but I knew the combination. I moved my palms in an intricate pattern on the cool surface, and a gap widened before me.

I crossed the threshold.

Here were kept the holy things of the Coven.

I looked upon that treasure-vault with new eyes, clearer because of Edward Bond's memories. That lens, burning with dull amber lights there in its hollowed place in the wall—I had never wondered much about it before. It killed. But memories of Earth-science told me why. It was not magic, but an instantaneous drainage of the electrical energy of the brain. And that conical black device—that killed, too. It could shake a man to pieces, by shuttling his life-force back and forth so rapidly between artificial cathode and anode that living flesh could not stand the strain. Alternating current, with variations!

But these weapons did not interest me now. I sought other loot. There were no death-traps to beware of, for none but the Coven knew the way to enter this treasure-room, or its location, or even that it existed, save in legends. And no slave or guard would have dared to enter Ghast Rhymi's tower.

MY GAZE passed over a sword, but not the one I needed; a burnished shield; a harp, set with an intricate array of manual controls. I knew that harp. Earth has legends of it—the harp of Orpheus, that could bring back the dead from Hades. Human hands could not play it, but I was not quite ready for the harp, yet.

What I wanted lay on a shelf, sealed in its cylindrical case. I broke open the seals and took out the thin black rod with its hand-grip.

The Wand of Power. The Wand that could tap the electro-magnetic force of a planet. So could other wands of this type—but this was the only one without

the safety-device that limited its power. It was dangerous to use.

In another case I found the Crystal Mask—a curved, transparent plate that shielded my eyes like a domino mask of glass. This mask would shield one from Edeyrn.

I searched further. But of the Sword of Llyr I could find no trace.

Time did not lag. I heard nothing of the noise of battle, but I knew that the battle went on, and I knew, too, that sooner or later the Coven would return to the Castle. Well, I could fight the Coven now, but I could not fight Llyr. I dared not risk the issue till I had made sure.

In the door of the vault I stood, staring at Ghast Rhymi's silvery head. Whatever guardian thought he kept here knew I had a right to enter the treasure room. He made no motion. His thoughts moved far out in unimaginable abysses, nor could they be easily drawn back.

And it was impossible to put pressure on Ghast Rhymi. He had the perfect answer. He could die.

Well, I too had an answer!

I went back into the vault and lifted the harp. I carried it out and set it down before the old man. No life showed in his blue stare.

I went to the windows and flung them open. Then I returned, dropping to the cushions beside the harp, and lightly touched its intricate controls.

That harp had been in the Earth-world, or others like it. Legends know its singing strings, as legends tell of mystic swords.

There was the lyre of Orpheus, strong with power, that Jupiter placed amid the stars forever. There was the harp of Gwydion of Britain, that charmed the souls of men. And the harp of Alfred, that helped to crush Daneland. There was the harp which David played before Saul.

Power rests in music. No man today can say what sound broke the walls of Jericho, but once men knew. . . .

HERE in the Dark World this harp had its legends among the common folk. Men said that a demon played it, that the airy fingers of elemental spirits plucked at its strings.

Well, in a way they were right, for an incredible perfection of science had created this harp. It was a machine. Sonic, sub-sonic, and pure vibration to match the thought-waves emitted by the brain blended into a whole that was part hypnosis and part electric magnetism. The brain is a colloid, a machine, and any machine can be controlled.

And the harp of power could find the key to a mind, and lay bonds upon that mind.

Through the open windows, faintly from below, I heard the clash of swords and the dim shouts of fighting men. But these sounds did not touch Ghast Rhymi. He was lost on the plane of pure abstraction, thinking his ancient, deep thoughts.

My fingers touched the controls of the harp, awkwardly at first, then with more ease as manual dexterity came back with memory.

The sigh of a plucked string whispered through the white room. The murmuring of minor notes, in a low, dreamily distant key. And as the machine found the pattern of Ghast Rhymi's mind, under my hands the harp quickened into breathing life.

The soul of Ghast Rhymi—translated into terms of pure music!

Shrill and ear-piercing a single note sang. Higher and higher it mounted, fading into inaudibility. Deep down a roaring, windy noise began, rising and swelling into the demon-haunted shout of a gale. Rivers of air poured their music into the threnody.

High—high—cold and pure and white as the snowy summit of a great mountain, that single thin note sang and sang again.

Louder grew the great winds. Rippling arpeggios raced through the rising torrent of the sorcerous music.

Thunder of riven rocks - shrill screaming of earth-quake-shaken lands —yelling of a deluge that poured down upon tossing forests.

A heavy humming note, hollow and unearthly, and I saw the gulfs between the worlds where the empty night of space makes a trackless desert.

And suddenly, incongruously, a gay lilting tune, with an infectious rocking rhythm, that brought to my mind bright colors and sunlit streams and fields.

Ghast Rhymi stirred.

For an instant awareness came back into his blue eyes. He saw me.

And I saw the life-fires sink within that frail, ancient body.

I knew that he was dying—that I had troubled his long peace—that he had relinquished his casual hold upon life.

I drew the harp toward me. I touched the controls.

Ghast Rhymi sat before me, dead, the faintest possible spark fading within that old brain.

I sent the sorcerous spell of the harp blowing like a mighty wind upon the dying embers of Ghast Rhymi's life.

As Orpheus drew back the dead Eurydice from Pluto's realm, so I cast my net of music, snared the soul of Ghast Rhymi, drew him back from death!

He struggled at first. I felt his mind turn and writhe, trying to escape, but the harp had already found the key to his mind, and it would not let him go. Inexorably it drew him.

The ember flickered—faded—brightened again.

Louder sang the strings. Deeper roared the tumult of shaking waters.

Higher the white, shrill note, pure as a star's icy light, leaped and ever rose.

Roaring, racing, sweet with honey-musk, perfumed with flower-scent and ambergris, blazing with color, opal and blood-ruby and amethyst-blue, that mighty tapestry of color rippled and shook like a visible web of magic through the room.

The web reached out.

Swept around Ghast Rhymi like a fowler's snare!

Back in those faded blue eyes the light of awareness grew. He had stopped struggling. He had given up the fight. It was easier to come back to life—to let me question him—than to battle the singing strings that could cage a man's very soul.

Under the white beard the old man's lips moved.

"Ganelon," he said. "I knew—when the harp sang—who played it. Well, ask your questions. And then let me die. I would not live in the days that are coming now. But you will live, Ganelon —and yet you will die too. That much I have read in the future."

The hoary head bent slowly. For an instant Ghast Rhymi listened—and I listened too.

The last, achingly sweet notes of the harp died upon the trembling air.

Through the open windows came the muted clash of sword and the wordless shriek of a dying man.

XIII

PITY flooded me. The shadow of greatness that had cloaked Ghast Rhymi was gone. He sat there, a shrunken, fragile old man, and I felt a momentary unreasoning impulse to turn on my heel and leave him to drift back into his peaceful abyss of thought. Once, I remembered, Ghast Rhymi had seemed a tall, huge figure—though he had never been that in my lifetime. But in my childhood I had sat at the feet of this Covenanter and looked up with awe at that majestic, bearded face with reverence.

Perhaps there had been more life in that face then, more warmth and humanity. It was remote now. It was like the face of a god, or of one who had looked upon too many gods.

My tongue stumbled.

"Master," I said. "I am sorry!"

No light came into the distant blue gaze, yet I sensed a stirring.

"You name me master?" he said.

"You—Ganelon? It has been a long time since you humbled yourself to anyone."

The taste of my triumph was ashes. I bowed my head. Yes, I had conquered Ghast Rhymi, and I did not like the savor of that conquest.

"In the end the circle completes itself," the old man said quietly. "We are more kin than the others. Both you and I are human, Ganelon, not mutants. Because I am Leader of the Coven I let Medea and the others use my wisdom. But—but—" He hesitated.

"For two decades my mind has dwelt in shadow," he went on. "Beyond good and evil, beyond life and the figures that move like puppets on the stream of life. When I was wakened, I would give the answers I knew. It did not matter. I had thought that I had lost all touch with reality. And that if death swept over every man and woman in the Dark World, it would not matter."

I could not speak. I knew that I had done Ghast Rhymi a very great wrong in wakening him from his deep peace.

The blue stare dwelt on me.

"And I find that it does matter, after all. No blood of mine runs in your veins, Ganelon. Yet we are kin. I taught you, as I would have taught my own son. I trained you for your task—to rule the Coven in my place. And now, I think I regret many things. Most of all the answer I gave the Covenanters after Medea brought you back from Earth-world."

"You told them to kill me," I said.

He nodded.

"Matholch was afraid. Edeyrn sided with him. They made Medea agree. Matholch said, 'Ganelon is changed. There is danger. Let the old man read the future and see what it holds.' So they came to me, and I let my mind ride the winds of time and see what lay ahead."

"And that was—?"

"The end of the Coven," Ghast Rhymi said. "If you lived. I foresaw the arms of Llyr reaching into the Dark World, and Matholch lying dead in a shadowed place, and doom upon Edeyrn and Medea. For time is fluid, Ganelon. It changes as men change. The probabilities alter. When you went into Earth-world, you were Ganelon. But you came back with a double mind. You have the memories of Edward Bond, which you can use as tools. Medea should have left you in Earthworld. But she loved you."

"Yet she agreed to let them kill me," I said.

"Do you know what was in her thoughts?" Ghast Rhymi asked. "In Caer Secaire, at the time of sacrifice, Llyr would come. And you have been sealed to Llyr. Did Medea think you could be killed, then?"

A doubt grew within me. But Medea had led me, like a sheep to slaughter, in the procession to the Caer. If she could justify herself, let her. I knew that Edeyrn and Matholch could not.

"I may let Medea live, then," I said. "But not the wolfling. I have already promised his life. And as for Edeyrn, she must perish."

I showed Ghast Rhymi the Crystal Mask . He nodded.

"But Llyr?"

"I was sealed to Him as Ganelon," I said. "Now you say I have two minds. Or, at least, an extra set of memories, even though they are artificial. I am not willing to be liege to Llyr! I learned many things in the Earth-world. *Llyr is no god!*"

The ancient head bent. A transparent hand rose and touched the ringlets of the beard. Then Ghast Rhymi looked at me, and he smiled.

"So you know that, do you?" he asked. "I will tell you something, Ganelon, that no one else has guessed. You are not the first to come from Earthworld to the Dark World. I was the first."

I stared at him with unconcealed amazement.

"And you were born in the Dark World. I was not," he said. "My flesh sprang from the dust of Earth. It has

been very long since I crossed, and I can never return now, for my span is long outlived. Only here can I keep the life-spark burning within me, though I do not much care about that either. Yet I am Earth-born, and I knew Vortigern and the kings of Wales. I had my own holdings at Caer-Merdin, and a different sun from this red ember in the Dark World's sky shone upon Caer-Merdin! Blue sky, blue sea of Britain, the gray stones of the Druid altars under the oak forests. That is my home, Ganelon. *Was* my home. Until my science, that men in those days called magic, brought me here, with a woman's aid. A Dark World woman named Viviane."

"You are Earth-born?" I said.

"Once—yes. As I grew older here, very, very old, I regretted my exile. I had acquired enough of wisdom. I would have changed it all for one breath of the cool, sweet air that blew in from the Irish Sea when I was a boy. But never could I return. My body would fall to dust in the Earth-world. So I lost myself in dreams—dreams of Earth, Ganelon."

His blue eyes brightened with memories.

His voice deepened.

"In my dreams I brought back the old days. I stood again on the crags of Wales, watching the salmon leaping in the waters of gray Usk. I saw Artorius again, and his father Uther, and I smelled the old smells of Britain in her youth. But they were dreams!

"And dreams are not enough. For the sake of the love I bore the dust from which I sprang, for the sake of a wind that blew from ancient Ireland, I will help you now, Ganelon. I had never thought that life would matter to me any more. But that these abominations should lead a man of Earth to slaughter—no! And man of Earth you are now, though born on this world of sorcery!"

HE leaned forward, compelling me with his gaze.

"You are right. Llyr is no god. He is—a monster. No more than that. And he can be slain."

"With the Sword Called Llyr?"

"Listen. Put these legends out of your mind. That is Llyr's power, and the power of the Dark World. All is veiled in mystic symbols of terror. But behind the veil lies simple truth. Vampire, werewolf, upas-tree—they are all biological freaks, mutations run wild! And the first mutation was Llyr. His birth split the one time-world into two, each spinning along its line of probability. He was a key factor in the temporal pattern of entropy.

"Listen again. At birth, Llyr was human. But his mind was not as the minds of others. He had certain natural powers, latent powers, which ordinarily would not have developed in the race for a million years. Because they did develop in him too soon, they were warped and distorted, and put to evil ends. In the future world of logic and science, his mental powers would have fitted. In the dark times of superstition, they did not fit too well. So he developed, with the science at his command and the mental strength he had, into a monster.

"Human once. Less human as he grew older and wiser in his alien knowledge. In Caer Llyr are machines which send out certain radiations necessary to the existence of Llyr. Those radiations permeate the Dark World. They have caused other mutations, such as Matholch and Edeyrn and Medea.

"Kill Llyr, and his machines will stop. The curse of abnormal mutations will be lifted. The shadow over this planet will be gone."

"How may I kill Him?" I asked.

"With the Sword Called Llyr. His life is bound up with that Sword, as a machine is dependent on its parts. I am not certain of the reason for this, Ganelon, but Llyr is not human—now. He is part machine and part pure energy and part something unimaginable. But he was born of flesh, and he must maintain his contact with the Dark World, or die. The Sword is his contact."

"Where is the Sword?"

"At Caer Llyr," Ghast Rhymi said. "Go there. By the altar, there is a crystal pane. Don't you remember?"

"I remember."

"Break that pane. Then you will find the sword called Llyr."

He sank back. His eyes closed, then opened again.

I knelt before him and he made the ancient Sign above me.

"Strange," he murmured, half to himself. "Strange that I should send a man to battle again, as I sent so many, long ago."

The white head bent forward. Snowy beard lay upon the snowy robe.

"For the sake of a wind that blew from Ireland," the old man whispered.

Through the open windows a breath of air drifted, gently ruffling the white ringlets of hair and beard. . . .

The winds of the Dark World stirred in the silent room, paused—and were gone!

Now, indeed, I stood alone. . . .

From Ghast Rhymi's chamber I went down the tower steps and into the courtyard.

The battle was nearly over. Scarcely a score of the Castle's defenders were still on their feet. Around them Lorryn's pack ravened and yelled. Back to back, grimly silent, the dead-eyed guardsmen wove their blades in a steel mesh that momentarily held at bay their attackers.

There was no time to be wasted here. I caught sight of Lorryn's scarred face and made for him. He showed me his teeth in a triumphant grin.

"We have them, Bond."

"It took you long enough," I said. "These dogs must be slain quickly!" I caught a sword from a nearby woodsman.

Power flowed up the blade and into the hilt—into me.

I plunged into the thick of the battle. The foresters made way for me. Beside me Lorryn laughed quietly, exultantly.

THEN I came face to face with a guardsman. His blade swung up in thrust and parry, and I twisted aside, so that his steel sang harmlessly through the air. My sword-point leaped like a striking snake for his throat. The shock of metal grating on bone jarred my wrist.

I tore the weapon free and glimpsed Lorryn, still grinning, engaging another of the guardsmen.

"Kill them!" I shouted. "Kill them!"

I did not wait for response. I went forward against the blindeyed soldiers of Medea, slashing, striking, thrusting as though these men were the Coven, my enemies! I hated each blankly staring face. Red tides of rage began to surge up, narrowing my vision and clouding my mind with hot mists.

For a few minutes I was drunk with the lust for killing.

Lorryn's hands gripped my shoulders. His voice came.

"Bond! *Bond!*"

The fogs were swept away. I stared around. Not one of the guardsmen was left alive. Bloody, hacked corpses lay sprawled on the gray flagstones of the courtyard. The woodsmen, panting hard, were wiping their blades clean.

"Did any escape to carry warning to Caer Secaire?" I asked.

Despite his perpetual scarred grin, Lorryn looked troubled.

"I'm not sure. I don't think so, but the place is a rabbit-warren."

"The harm's done, then," I said. "We hadn't enough men to throw a cordon around the Castle."

He grimaced. "Warned or not, what's the odds? We can slay the Covenanters as we kill their guards."

"We ride to Caer Llyr," I said, watching him.

I saw the shadow of fear in the cold gray eyes. Lorryn rubbed his grizzled beard and scowled.

"I don't understand. Why?"

"To kill Llyr."

Amazement battled with ancient superstitious terror in his face. His gaze

searched mine and apparently read the answer he wanted.

"To kill—*that?*"

I nodded. "I've seen Ghast Rhymi. He told me the way."

The men around us were watching and listening. Lorryn hesitated.

"We didn't bargain for this," he said. "Yet by the gods! To kill *Llyr!*"

Suddenly he sprang to action, shouting orders. Swords were sheathed. Men ran to untether the mounts. Within minutes we were in our saddles, riding out from the courtyard, the shadow of the Castle falling heavily upon us until the moon lifted above the tallest tower.

I rose in my stirrups and looked back. Up there, dead, sat Ghast Rhymi, first of the Coven to die by my hand. I had killed him as surely as if I had plunged steel into his heart.

I dropped back into the saddle, pressing heels into my horse's flanks. He bolted forward. Lorryn urged his steed level with mine. Behind us the woodsmen strung out in a long, uneven line as we galloped across the low hills toward the distant mountains. It would be dawn before we could reach Caer Llyr. And there was no time to waste.

MEDEA and Edeyrn and Matholch! The names of the three beat like muffled drums in my brain. Traitors to me, Medea no less than the others, for had she not been willing to sacrifice me? Death I would give Edeyrn and the wolfling. Medea I might let live, but only as my slave, nothing more.

With Ghast Rhymi dead, I was leader of the Coven! In the old man's tower, sentimental weakness had nearly betrayed me. The weakness of Edward Bond, I thought. His memories had watered my will and diluted my power.

Now I no longer needed his memories. At my side swung the Crystal Mask and the wand of Power. I knew how to get the Sword Called Llyr. It was Ganelon and not the weakling Edward Bond, who would make himself master of the Dark World.

Briefly I wondered where Bond was now. When Medea had brought me through the Need-fire to the dark World, Edward Bond, at that same moment, must have returned to Earth. I smiled ironically, imagining the surprise that must have been his. Perhaps he had tried, and was still trying, to get back to the Dark World. But without Freydis to aid him, his attempts would be futile. Freydis was helping me now, not Bond.

And Bond would stay on Earth! The substitution would not occur again if I could help it. And I *could* help it. Strong Freydis might be, but could she stand against the man who had killed Llyr? I did not think so.

I sent a sly sidewise glance at Lorryn. Fool! Arles too was another of the same breed. Only Freydis had sense enough not to trust me.

The strongest of my enemies must die first—Llyr. Then the Coven. After that, the woodsmen would taste my power. They would learn that I was Ganelon, not the Earth weakling, Edward Bond!

I thrust the memories of Bond out of my mind. I drove them away. I banished them utterly.

As Ganelon I would battle Llyr.

And as Ganelon I would rule the Dark World!

Rule—with iron and fire!

XIV

HOURS before we came to Caer Llyr we saw it, at first a blacker blackness against the night sky, and slowly, gradually, deepening into an ebon mountain as the rose-gray dawn spread behind us.

Our cantering shadows fell before us, to be trodden under the horses' hoofs. Cool, fresh winds whispered—whispered of the sacrifices at Caer Secaire, of the seeking minds of the Coven that spied across the land.

But Caer Llyr loomed on the edge of darkness ahead—guarding the night!

Huge the Caer was, and alien. It

seemed shapeless, a Titan mound of jumbled black rock thrown almost casually together. Yet I knew that there was design in its strange geometry.

Two jet pillars, each fifty feet tall, stood like the legs of a colossus, and between them was an unguarded portal. Only there was there any touch of color about the Caer.

A veil of flickering rainbows played lambently, like a veil, across that threshhold. Opalescent and faintly glowing, the shadow-curtain swung and quivered as though gentle winds drifted through gossamer folds of silk.

Fifty feet high was that curtain and twenty feet broad. Straddling it the ebon pillars rose. And above and beyond, towering breathtakingly to the dawn-clouded sky, squatted the Caer, a mountain-like structure that had never been built by man.

From Caer Llyr a breath of fear came coldly, scattering the woodsmen like leaves before a gale. They broke ranks, deployed out and drew together again as I raised my hand and Lorryn called a command.

I stared around at the low hills surrounding us.

"Never in my memory or my father's memory have men come this close to Caer Llyr," Lorryn said. "Except for Covenanters, of course. Nor would the foresters follow me now, Bond. They follow you."

How far would they follow? My wondering thought was cut off as a woodsman shouted warning. He rose in his stirrups and pointed south.

Over the hills, riding like demons in a dusty cloud, came horsemen, their armor glittering in the red sunlight!

"So someone did escape from the Castle," I said between my teeth. "And the Coven have been warned, after all!"

Lorryn grinned and shrugged. "Not many."

"Enough to delay us." I frowned, trying to make the best plan. "Lorryn, stop them. If the Coven ride with their guards, kill them too. But hold them back from the Caer until—"

"Until?"

"I don't know. I'll need time. How much time I can't say. Battling and conquering Llyr won't be the work of a moment."

"Nor is it the work of one man," Lorryn said doubtfully. "With us to aid you, victory will fly at your elbow."

"I know the weapon against Llyr," I said. "One man can wield it. But keep the guardsmen back, and the Covenanters too. Give me time!"

"There will be no difficulty about that," Lorryn said, a flash of excitement lighting his eyes. "For look!"

Angling across the hills, riding one by one into view, hotly pursuing the armored rout, came gleen-clad figures, spurring their horses forward.

Those figures were woodsmen's women whom we had left behind in the valley. They were armed now, for I saw the glitter of swords. Nor were swords their only weapons. A spiteful crack echoed, a puff of smoke arose, and one of the guardsmen flung up his hands and toppled from his mount.

EDWARD BOND had known how to make rifles! And the woodsfolk had learned how to use them!

At the head of the woodsmen I noted two lithe forms, one a slim, supple girl whose ashy-blond hair streamed behind her like a banner—Arles.

And at her side, on a great white steed, rode one whose giant form I could not mistake even from this distance. Freydis spurred forward like a Valkyrie galloping into battle.

Freydis and Arles, and the women of the forest!

Lorryn's laugh held exultation.

"We have them, Bond!" he cried, his fist tightening on the rein. "Our women at their heels, and we to strike from the flank—we'll catch and crush them between hammer and anvil. God grant the shape-changer rides there!"

"Then ride," I snapped. "No more talk! Ride and crush them. Hold them

back from the Caer!"

With that I raced my steed forward, lying low on the horse's mane, driving like a thunderbolt toward the black mountain ahead. Did Lorryn know how suicidal might be the mission on which I had sent him? Matholch he might slay, and even Medea. But if Edeyrn rode with the Coven guards, if ever she dropped the hood from her face, neither sword nor bullet could save the woodsmen!

Still they would give me time. And if the woodsmen's ranks were thinned, so much the better for me later. I would deal with Edeyrn in my own way when the time came.

Ahead the black columns stood. Behind me a shouting rose, and a crackle of rifle-fire. I looked back, but a fold of the hills hid the combat from my eyes.

I sprang from the horse's back and stood before the pillars—between them. The coruscating veil sparkled and ran like milky water before me. Above, towering monstrously, stood the Caer, the focus of the evil that had spread across the Dark World.

And in it reposed Llyr, my enemy!

I still had the sword I had taken from one of the woodsmen, but I doubted if ordinary steel would be much good within the Caer. Nevertheless I made sure the weapon was at my side as I walked forward.

I stepped through the veil.

For twenty paces I moved forward in utter darkness. Then light came.

But it was the light that beats upon a snow plain, so bright, so glittering, that it blinds. I stood motionless, waiting. Presently the dazzle resolved itself into flickering atoms of brightness, weaving and darting in arabesque patterns. Not cold, no!

Tropical warmth beat upon me.

The shining atoms drove at me. They tingled upon my face and hands. They sank like intangible things through my garments and were absorbed by my skin. They did not lull me. Instead, my body greedily drank that weird snowstorm of —energy?—and was in turn energized by it.

Tide of life sang ever stronger in my veins.

I saw three gray shadows against the white. Two tall and one slight and small as a child's shadow.

I knew them. I knew who cast them.

I heard Matholch's voice.

"Kill him. Kill him now."

And Medea's answer.

"No. He need not die. He must not."

"But he must!" Maltholch snarled, and Edeyrn's sexless, thin voice echoed his.

"He is dangerous, Medea. He must die, and only on Llyr's altar can he be slain. For he is the Sealed of Llyr."

"He need not die," Medea said stubbornly. "If he is made harmless—weaponless—he may live."

"How?" Edeyrn asked, and for answer the red witch stepped forward out of the dazzling white shimmer.

No longer a shadow. No longer a two-dimensional grayness. She stood before me—Medea, witch of Colchis.

Her dark hair fell to her knees. Her dark gaze slanted at me. Evil she was, and alluring as Lilith.

I dropped my hand to sword-hilt.

I did *not*. I could not move. Faster swirled the darting bright atoms, whirling about me, sinking into my body to betray me.

I could not move.

Beyond Medea the twin shadows bent forward.

"The power of Llyr holds him," Edeyrn whispered. "But Ganelon is strong, Medea. If he breaks his fetters, we are lost."

"By then he will have no weapons," Medea said, and smiled at me.

NOW indeed I knew my danger. Very easily my steel could have bitten through Medea's soft throat, and heartily I wished it had done so long ago. For I remembered Medea's power. The mutation that set her apart from others.

That which had caused her to be named —vampire.

I remembered victims of hers that I had seen. The dead-eyed guardsmen, the Castle slaves, hollow shells of men, the walking dead, all soul drained from them, and most of their life-force as well.

Her arms stole around my neck. Her mouth lifted to mine.

In one hand she held her black wand. It touched my head, and a gentle shock, not unpleasant, crawled along my scalp. The—the conductor, I knew, and a gust of insane laughter shook me at the incongruity of the weapon.

But there was no magic here. There was science, of a high order, a science made possible only for those who were trained to it, or for those who were mutants. Medea drank energy, but not through sorcery. I had seen that wand used too often to believe that.

The wand opened the closed circuit of the mind and its energies. It tapped the brain, as a copper wire can tap a generated current.

Diverting the life-force to Medea!

The shining mist-motes swirled faster. They closed in around us, bathing us in a swirling cloak. The gray shadowiness fell away from Edeyrn and Matholch. Dun-cloaked, cowled dwarf and lean, grinning wolfling stood there, watching.

Edeyrn's face I could not see, though the deadly cold crept from beneath the cowl like an icy wind. Matholch's tongue crept out and circled his lips. His eyes were bright with triumph and excitement.

A numbing, lethargic languor was stealing over me. Against my mouth Medea's lips grew hotter, more ardent, as my own lips chilled. Desperately I tried to move, to grasp my sword-hilt.

I could not.

Now the bright veil thinned again. Beyond Matholch and Edeyrn I could see a vast space, so enormous that my gaze failed to pierce its violet depths. A stairway led up to infinite heights.

A golden glow burned high above.

But behind Matholch and Edeyrn, a little to one side, stood a curiously-carved pedestal whose front was a single pane of transparent glass. It shone steadily with a cool blue light. What lay within I did not know, but I recognized that crystal pane.

Ghast Rhymi had spoken of it. Behind it must lie the Sword Called Llyr.

Faintly now—faintly—I heard Matholch's satisfied chuckle.

"Ganelon, my love, do not struggle against me," Medea whispered. "Only I can save you. When your madness passes, we will return to the Castle."

Yes, for I would be no menace then. Matholch would not bother to harm me. As a mindless, soulless thing I would return to the Castle of the Coven as Medea's slave.

I, Ganelon, hereditary Lord of the Coven and the Sealed of Llyr!

The golden glow high above brightened. Crooked lightnings rushed out from it and were lost in the violet dimness.

My eyes found that golden light that was the Window of Llyr.

My mind reached out toward it.

My soul strained to it!

Witch and vampire-mutation Medea might be—or sorceress—but she had never been sealed to Llyr. No dark power beat latently in her blood as it beat in mine. Well I knew now that, no matter how I might renounce my allegiance to Llyr, there yet had been a bond. Llyr had power over me, but I could draw upon his power as well!

I drew on that power now!

THE golden window brightened. Again forked lightnings ran out from it and were gone. A muffled, heavy drumbeat muttered from somewhere, like the pulse of Llyr.

Like the heart of Llyr, stirring from sleep to waking.

Through me power rushed, quickening my flesh from its lethargy. I drew on Llyr's power without measuring the

cost. I saw fear flash across Malthoch's face, and Edeyrn made a quick gesture.

"Medea," she said.

But Medea had already sensed that quickening. I felt her body quiver convulsively against mine. Avidly she pressed against me, faster and faster she drank the energy that made me alive.

But the energy of Llyr poured into me! Hollow thunders roared in the vast spaces above. The golden window blazed with dazzling brightness. And around us now the sparkling notes of light paled, shrank, and were gone.

"Kill him!" Matholch howled. "He holds Llyr!"

He sprang forward.

From somewhere a bloody figure in dented armour stumbled. I saw Lorrynn's scarred face twist in amazement as he blinked at the tableau. His sword, red to the hilt, was bare in his hand.

He saw me with Medea's arms about my neck.

He saw Edeyrn.

And he saw Matholch!

A wordless, inarticulate sound ripped from Lorryn's throat. He lifted high the sword.

As I tore myself free from Medea's grip, as I sent her reeling away, I saw Matholch's wand come up. I reached for my own wand, but there was no need.

Lorryn's blade sang. Matholch's hand, still gripping the wand, was severed at the wrist. Blood spouted from cut arteries.

Howling, the shape-changer dropped forward. The lycanthropic change came upon him. Hypnotism, mutation, dark sorcery—I could not tell. But the thing that sprang at Lorryn's throat was not human.

Lorryn laughed. He sent his sword spinning away.

He met the wolfling's charge, bracing himself strongly and caught the thing by throat and leg. Fanged jaws snapped viciously at him.

Lorryn heaved the monster above his head. His joints cracked with the inhuman strain. One instant Lorryn stood there, holding his enemy high, while the wolf-jaws snarled and strove to rend him.

He dashed the wolf down upon the stones!

I heard bones snap like rotten twigs. I heard a scream of dying, terrible agony from a gaping muzzle from which blood poured.

Then Matholch, in his own shape, broken, dying, lay writhing at our feet!

XV

MIRACULOUSLY the weakness that had chained me was gone. Llyr's strength poured through me. I unsheathed my sword and ran past Matholch's body, ignoring Lorryn who stood motionless, staring down. I ran to the pedestral with its blue-lit pane.

I gripped the sword's blade and sent the heavy hilt crashing against the pane.

There was a tinkling of pizzicato notes, a singing of thin goblin laughter. The shards fell clashing at my feet.

At my feet also dropped a sword. A sword of crystal, nearly five feet long—pommel and guard and blade all of clearest glass.

It had been part of the window. For within the hollow pedestal was nothing at all. The sword had been part of the pane, so that my breaking the crystal had released the weapon from its camouflaged hiding-place.

Along the sleek blade blue light ran. Within the crystal blue fires burned wanly. I bent and picked up the sword. The hilt was warm and alive.

The Sword Called Llyr in my left hand, the sword with blade of steel in my right, I stood upright.

Paralyzing cold breathed past me.

I knew that cold.

So I did not turn. I swung the steel sword under my arm, snatched the Crystal Mask from my belt, and donned it. I drew the Wand of Power.

Only then did I turn.

Through the Mask queer glimmers and shiftings, ran, distorting what I saw. The properties of light were oddly altered by the Mask. But it had its purpose. It was a filter.

Matholch lay motionless now. Beyond his body Medea was rising to her feet, her dark hair disordered. Facing me stood Lorryn, a stone man, only his eyes alive in his set, white face.

He was staring at Edeyrn, whose sleek dark head I saw. Her back was toward me. The cowl had been flung back upon her shoulders.

Lorryn sagged down, the life going out of him. Bonelessly as water he collapsed.

He lay dead.

Then, slowly, slowly, Edeyrn turned.

She was tiny as a child, and her face was like a child's too, in its immature roundness. But I did not see her face, for even through the Crystal Mask burned the Gordon's glare. The blood stilled within me. A slow tide of ice crept with iron lethargy into my brain and cold weariness engulfed me.

Only in the eyes of the Gorgon fire burned.

DEADLY radiations were there, what Earth-scientists call ectogenetic rays, but limited till now to the plant-world. Only the mad mutation that had created Edeyrn could have brought from hell such a nightmare trick of biology.

But I did not fall. I did not die. The radiations were filtered, made harmless, by the vibration-warping properties of the Mask I wore.

I lifted the Wand of Power.

Red fires blasted from it. Scarlet, licking tongues seared out toward Edeyrn.

Lashes of flame tore at her, like crimson whips that burned and left bloody weals on that calm child-face.

She drew back, the lance of her stare driving at me.

With her, step by step, retreated Medea. Toward the foot of the great stairway that led to Llyr's Window.

The whips of fire seared across her eyes.

She turned and, stumbling, began to run up the stairway. Medea paused, her arms lifted in an uncompleted gesture. But in my face she read no softening.

She, too, turned, and followed Edeyrn.

I dropped the useless sword of steel. Wand in left hand, the Sword Called Llyr in my right, I followed them.

As my foot touched the first step, a trembling vibration shook the violet air about me. Now almost I regretted having called upon Llyr to break Medea's spell. For Llyr was awake, watching, and warned.

The pulse of Llyr muttered through the huge Caer. The golden lightnings flamed from the Window high above.

Briefly two black, small silhouettes showed against that amber glow. They were Edeyrn and Medea, climbing.

After them I went. And at each step the way grew harder. I seemed to walk through a thickening, invisible torrent that was like a wind or a wave flowing down from that shining window, striving to tear me from my foothold, to rip the crystal sword from my grip.

Up and up I went. Now the Window was a glaring blaze of yellow fires. The lightnings crackled out incessantly, while rocking crashes of thunder reverberated along the vaulted abysses of the Caer. I leaned forward as though against a gale. Doggedly I fought my way up the stair.

There was someone behind me.

I did not turn. I dare not, for fear the torrent would sweep me from my place. I crawled up the last few steps, and came out on a level platform of stone, a disc-shaped dais, on which stood a ten-foot cube. Three of its sides were of black rock. The side that faced me was a glaring blaze of amber brilliance.

Far below, dizzingly far, was the floor of the Caer. Behind me the stairway ran down to those incredible depths, and the tremendous wind still blew upon me, pouring out from the window,

seeking to whirl me to my death.

To the Window's left stood Edeyrn, to its right, Medea. And in the Window—

The blazing golden clouds whirled, thickened, tossed like storm-mists, while still the blinding flashes spurted from them. The thunder never ceased now. But it pulsed. It rose and fell in steady cadence, in unison with the heartbeat of Llyr.

Monster or mutation—human once, or half-human—Llyr had grown in power since then. Ghast Rhymi had warned me.

Part machine and part pure energy and part something unthinkable, the power of Llyr blasted through the golden clouds upon me!

THE Wand of Power dropped from my hand. I lifted the crystal sword and managed one forward step. Then the helltide caught me, and I could advance no further. I could only fight, with every bit of my strength, against the avalanche that strove to thrust me toward the edge of the hanging platform.

Louder grew the thunders. Brighter the lightnings flamed.

The cold stare of Edeyrn chilled me. Medea's face was inhuman now. Yellow clouds boiled out from the Window and caught Edeyrn and Medea in their embrace.

Then they rolled toward me and overwhelmed me.

Dimly I could see the brighter glow that marked Llyr's Window. And two vague silhouttes, Edeyrn and Medea.

I strove to step forward. Instead I was borne back toward the edge—back and back.

Great arms caught me about the waist. A braid of white hair tossed by my eyes. The giant strength of Freydis stood like a wall of iron between me and the abyss.

From the corner of my eye I saw she had wound a scrap torn from her white robe about her head, shielding her from the Gorgon's stare. Blindly, guided by some strange instinct, the Valkyrie thrust me forward.

Against us the golden clouds rolled, sentient, palpable, veined with white lightnings and shaking with deep thunders.

Freydis strove silently. I bent forward like a bow, battering against the torrent.

Step by step I won forward, Freydis to aid me. She stood as a bulwark against my back. I could hear her panting breath, great gasps that ripped from her throat as she linked her strength with mine.

My chest felt as though a white-hot core of iron was driven through it. Yet I went on. Nothing existed now but that golden brightening amid the clouds, clouds of creation, sentient with the shaking tumult of breaking universes, worlds beyond worlds, crashing into ruin under the power of Llyr....

I stood before the window.

It fell to tinkling fragments at my feet. The veined blue glimmers writhed and coiled about the broken blade, were sucked into the Window.

Back rushed the cloud-masses. A tremendous, nearly unbearable vibration ripped through the Caer, shaking it like a sapling. The golden clouds were drawn through the window.

With them went Edeyrn and Medea!

One glimpse I had of them, the brand of my fire like a red mask across Edeyrn's eyes, Medea's face despairing and filled with a horror beyond life, her gaze fixed on me with an imploring plea that was infinitely terrible. Then they vanished!

For one instant I saw through the Window. I saw something beyond space and time and dimension, a writhing, ravening chaos that bore down upon Medea and Edyrn and a golden core of light that I knew for Llyr.

Once almost human, Llyr, at the end, bore no relation to anything remotely human.

The grinding millstones of Chaos crushed the three!

The thunder died.

Before me stood the altar of Llyr. But it held no Window now. All four sides were of black, dead stone!

XVI

BLACKNESS and black stones were the last things I saw, before dark oblivion closed down over me like folding wings. It was as if Llyr's terrible resistance was all that had held me upright in the last fierce stages of our struggle. As he fell, so fell Ganelon at the foot of the Windowless altar.

How long I lay there I do not know. But slowly, slowly Caer Llyr came back around me, and I knew I was lying prostrate upon the altar. I sat up painfully, the dregs of exhaustion still stiffening my body, though I knew I must have slept, for that exhaustion was no longer the overwhelming tide that had flooded me as I fell.

Beyond me, at the head of the great steep stairs, Freydis lay, half stretched upon the steps as if she had striven to return to her people in the moment before collapsing. Her eyes were still bound, and her mighty arms lay flung out upon the platform, all strength drained from them by the fierceness of our battle. Strangely, as she lay there, she brought back to my double-minded memories the thought of a figure from Earth—another mighty woman in white robes, with bandaged eyes and upraised arms, blind Justice holding her eternal scales. Faintly I smiled at the thought. In the Dark World—my world, now—justice was Ganelon, and not blind.

Freydis stirred. One hand lifted uncertainly to the cloth across her eyes. I let her awaken. Presently we must struggle again together, Justice and I. But I did not doubt who would prevail.

I rose to my knees, and heard a silvery tinkling as something slid in fragments from my shoulder. The Mask, broken when I fell. Its crystal shards lay among those other shards which had blasted Llyr from the Dark World when the Sword of Llyr broke. I thought of the strange blue lightnings which had wrought at last what no other thing in the Dark World could accomplish—Llyr's destruction. And I thought I understood.

He had passed too far beyond this world ever to touch it except in the ceremonies of the Golden Window. Man, demon, god, mutation into namelessness—whatever he had been, he had kept but one link with the Dark World which spawned him. A link enshrined in the Sword Called Llyr. By that talisman he could return for the sacrifices which fed him, return for the great ceremonies of the Sealing that had made me half his own. But only by that talisman.

So it must be safely hidden to be his bridge for the returning. And safely hidden it was. Without Ghast Rhymi's knowledge, who could have found it? Without the strength of the great Lord Ganelon—well, yes, and the strength of Freydis too—who could have won close enough to the window to shatter the Sword upon the only thing in the Dark World that could break it? Yes, Llyr had guarded his talisman as strongly as any guard could be. But vulnerable he was. to the one man who could wield that Sword.

So the Sword broke, and the bridge between worlds broke, and Llyr was gone into a chaos from which there could never be a returning.

Medea too—red witch of Colchis, lost love, drinker of life, gone beyond recalling. . . .

For a moment I closed my eyes.

"Well, Ganelon?"

I LOOKED up. Freydis was smiling grimly at me from beneath the uplifted blindfold. I rose to my feet and watched in silence while she got to hers. Triumph flooded through me in great waves of intoxicating warmth. The world I had just awakened to was wholly mine now, and not this woman nor any other human should balk me of my

destiny. Had I not vanquished Llyr and slain the last of the Coven? And was I not stronger in magic than any man or woman now who walked the Dark World? I laughed, the deep sound echoing from the high vaults about us and rolling back in reverberant exultation until that which had been Caer Llyr was alive with the noise of my mirth. But Llyr was here no longer.

"Let this be Caer Ganelon!" I said, hearing the echo of my own name rolling back as if the castle itself replied.

"Ganelon!" I shouted. "Caer Ganelon!" I laughed to hear the whole vast hollow repeating my name. While the echoes still rolled I spoke to Freydis.

"You have a new master now, you forest people! Because you helped me you shall be rewarded, old woman, but I am master of the Dark World—I, Ganelon!" And the walls roared back to me, "Ganelon—Ganelon!"

Freydis smiled.

"Not so fast, Covenanter," she said calmly. "Did you think I trusted you?"

I gave her a scornful smile. "What can you do to me now? Only one thing could slay me before today—Llyr Himself. Now Llyr is gone, and Ganelon is immortal! You have no power to touch me, sorceress!"

She straightened on the step, her ageless face a little below mine. There was a sureness in her eyes that sent the first twinge of uneasiness into my mind. Yet what I had said was true for no one in the Dark World could harm me, now. Yet Freydis' smile did not waver.

"Once I sent you through limbo into the Earth-world," she said. "Could you stop me if I sent you there again?"

Relief quieted my tremor of unease.

"Tomorrow or the next day—yes, I could stop you. Today, no. But I am Ganelon now, and I know the way back. I am Ganelon, and forewarned, and I think you could not so easily send me Earthward again, naked of memories and clothed in another man's past. I remember and I could return. You would waste your time and mine, Freydis. Yet try it, if you will, and I warn you, I should be back again before your spell was finished."

Her smile did not falter. She folded her arms, hiding her hands in the flowing sleeves. She was very sure of herself.

"You think you are a godling, Ganelon," she said. "You think no mortal power can touch you now. You have forgotten one thing. As Llyr had his weakness, as Edeyrn did, and Medea and Matholch so have you, Covenanter. In this world there is no man to match you. But in the Earth World there is, Lord Ganelon! In that world your equal lives, and I mean to call him out to fight one last battle for the freedom of the Dark World. Edward Bond could slay you, Ganelon!"

I felt the blood leave my face, a little wind of chill like Edeyrn's glance breathed over me. I *had* forgotten. Even Llyr, by his own unimaginable hand, could have died. And I could die by my own hand too, or by the hand of that other self who was Edward Bond.

"Fool!" I said. "Dotard! Have you forgotten that Bond and I never stand in the same world? When I came, he vanished out of this land, just as I must vanish if you bring him here. How can a man and his reflection ever come hand to hand? How could he touch me, old woman?"

"Easily," she smiled. "Very easily. He cannot fight you here, nor in the Earth-world. That is true, but limbo, Ganelon? Have you forgotten limbo?"

Her hands came out of her sleeves. There was a rod of blinding silver in each. Before I could stir she had brought the rods together, crossing them before her smiling face. At the intersection forces of tremendous power blazed into an instant's being, forces that streamed from the poles of the world and could touch only for the beat of a second if that world were not to be shaken into fragments. I felt the building reel below me.

I felt the gateway open....

HERE was grayness, nothing but oblivion made visible all around me. I staggered with the suddenness of it, the shock, and the terrible tide of anger that came surging up through my whole body at the knowledge of Freydis' trickery.

Out of the grayness a mirror loomed before me. A mirror? I saw my own face, bewildered, uncomprehending, staring back into my eyes. But I was not wearing the ragged blue garments of sacrifice which I had donned so many eons ago in the Castle of the Coven. I seemed to wear Earth garments, and I seemed not quite myself, not quite Ganelon. I seemed—

"Edward Bond!" said the voice of Freydis behind me.

The reflection of myself glanced across my shoulder, and a look of recognition and relief came over it.

"Freydis!" he cried, in my own voice. "Freydis, thank God! I've tried—"

"Wait," Freydis stopped him. "Listen. There is one last trial before you. This man is Ganelon. He has undone all your work among the forest people. He has slain Llyr and the Coven. There is none in the Dark World to stay his hand if he wins his way back to it. Only you can stop him, Edward Bond."

I did not wait for her to say anything more. I knew what must be done. I lunged forward before he could speak or stir, and drove a heavy blow into the face that might have been my own. It was a strange thing, for it was as if I struck myself.

I saw him reel back, and my own head reeled in imagination, so that the first blow rocked us both.

He caught himself a dozen feet away and stood for a moment, unsteady on his feet, looking at me with a confusion that might have been the mirror of my own face, for I knew there was confusion there too.

Then anger flushed those bewildering, familiar features and I saw blood break from the corner of his mouth and trickle across his chin.

He dropped into a half-crouch and came for me, stooping to protect his body from my fists. I wished fervently for a sword or a gun. I have never cared for an equal fight, as Ganelon does not fight for sport, but to win. But this fight must be unbelievably equal.

He dodged beneath my blow, and I felt the rocking jar of what seemed to be my own fist jolting against my cheekbone. He danced back, light-footed, out of range.

Rage came snarling up in my throat. I wanted nothing of this boxing, this game fought by rules. Ganelon fought to win! I roared and hurled myself forward in a crushing embrace that carried us both heavily to the gray sponginess that was limbo's floor. My fingers sank delightfully in his throat. I groped savagely for his eyes. He grunted with effort and I felt the sharp pain of breaking bone.

So wholly was he myself, and I he, that for an instant I was not sure whose rib had snapped beneath whose blow. Then I drew a deep breath and sobbed it out again half finished as pain like bright light flashed through my body, and I knew it was my own rib.

THE knowledge maddened me. Careless of pain or caution, I drove my fists savagely into him at blind random, feeling exultantly the crackle of bone beneath my knuckles, the spurt of blood over my hard-clenched hands. We strove together in a terrible locked embrace, there upon the floor of limbo, in a nightmare that had no real being, except for the pain shooting through me after each breath.

But in a moment or two, I knew somehow, very surely that I was his master. And this is how I knew. He rolled half over to jab a hard blow into my face, and before the blow began, I had blocked it. I had *known*. He squirmed from beneath me and braced himself to strike me again in the ribs, and before he could strike, I had twisted sideways away. Again I had *known*.

For I had been Edward Bond once, in every way that matters. I had lived in his memory and his world. And I knew Edward Bond as I knew myself. Instinct seemed to tell me what he would do next. He could not out-think me, and he could not hope to out-fight me, to whom his every thought was revealed in the moment before he could act upon it.

Even in the pain of the broken rib, I laughed then. Freydis had overreached herself at last! In smothering Ganelon under Edward Bond's memories in the Earth World, she had given me the means to vanquish him now! He was mine, to finish when I chose, and the Dark World was mine, and Edward Bond's kingdom of free people was mine too, and Edward Bond's lovely pale-haired bride, and everything that might have been his own.

I laughed exultantly, and twisted in three perfectly timed motions that blocked and overbalanced the man who was myself. Three motions only—and then I had him across my knee, taut-stretched, his spine pressing hard against my thigh.

I grinned down at him. My blood dripped into his face. I saw it strike there, and I met his eyes, and then strangely, for one flashing instant, I knew a fierce yearning for defeat. In that instant, I prayed voicelessly to a nameless god that Edward Bond might yet save himself, and Ganelon might die. . . .

I called forth all the strength that was in me, and limbo swam redly before my eyes and the pain of my broken rib was a lance of white light as I drew the deep breath that was Edward Bond's last.

I broke his back across my knee.

XVII

HURRIEDLY two cold, smooth hands pressed hard upon my forehead. I looked up. And I knelt there, unresisting, feeling the body of the man who had been myself slide from my knee.

Freydis pressed me down. We lay side by side, the living and the dead.

The silver rods of the sorceress touched my head, and made a bridge between Bond and Ganelon. I remembered Medea's wand that could draw the life-force from the mind. A dull, numbing paralysis had me.

Sudden agonizing pain shot through me. My back! I tried to scream with the white fury of that wrenching agony, but my throat was frozen. I felt Edward Bond's wounds!

I felt the mind of Edward Bond come back from the gulfs. Side by side we lay in flesh, and side by side in spirit.

There was blackness, and two flames, burning with a cold, clear fire. . . .

One was the mind—the life—of Edward Bond. One was my life!

The flames bent toward each other!

They mingled and were one!

Life and soul and mind of Edward Bond merged with life of Ganelon!

Where two flames had burned, there was one now. One only.

And the identity of Ganelon ebbed, sank . . . faded into a graying shadow as the fires of Edward Bond's life leaped ever higher!

Magic of Freydis drowned the soul of Ganelon and gave his body to the life of Edward Bond!

I saw Ganelon—*die*. . . .

WHEN I opened my eyes again, I knelt upon the altar that had been Llyr's. The empty vaults towered hollowly above us. Limbo was gone. The body across my knee was gone. Freydis smiled down at me with her ageless, timeless smile.

"Welcome back to the Dark World, Edward Bond."

Yes, it was true. I knew that. I knew my own identity, housed though it was in another man's body. Dizzily I blinked, but Ganelon was gone. He had vanished with limbo, vanished like a scatter of smoke, vanished as if the prayer he breathed in his extremity had been answered by the nameless god he prayed to.

I was Edward Bond again.

"Do you know why Ganelon could

break you, Edward Bond?" Freydis said softly. "Do you know why you could not vanquish him? It was not what he thought. I know he believed he read your mind because he had dwelt there, but that was not the reason. When a man fights himself, my son, the same man does not fight to win. Only the suicide hates himself. Deep within Ganelon lay the knowledge of his own evil, and the hatred of it. So he could strike his own image and exult in the blow, because he hated himself in the depths of his own mind.

"But you had earned your own respect. You could not strike as hard as he because you are not evil. And Ganelon won—and lost. In the end, he did not fight me. He had slain himself, and the man who does that has no combat left in him."

Her voice sank to a murmur.

"Go out now, Edward Bond. There is much to be done in the Dark World!"

So, leaning upon her arm, I went down the long steps that Ganelon had climbed. I saw the green glimmer of the day outside, the shimmer of leaves, the motion of waiting people. I remembered all that Ganelon had remembered, but upon the mind of Ganelon the mind of Edward Bond was forever superimposed, and I knew that only thus could the Dark World be ruled.

The two together, twinned forever in one body, and the control forever mine—Edward Bond's.

We came out under the emptied arch of the opening, and daylight was blinding for a moment after that haunted darkness. Then I saw a pale, sweet girl in green, haloed by her floating hair, turn a face of incredulous radiance to mine. I forgot the pain in my side.

Arles' hair swam like mist about us both as my arms closed around her.

The Dark World was free, and ours.

But Medea, Medea, red witch of Colchis, how we might have reigned together! ● ● ●

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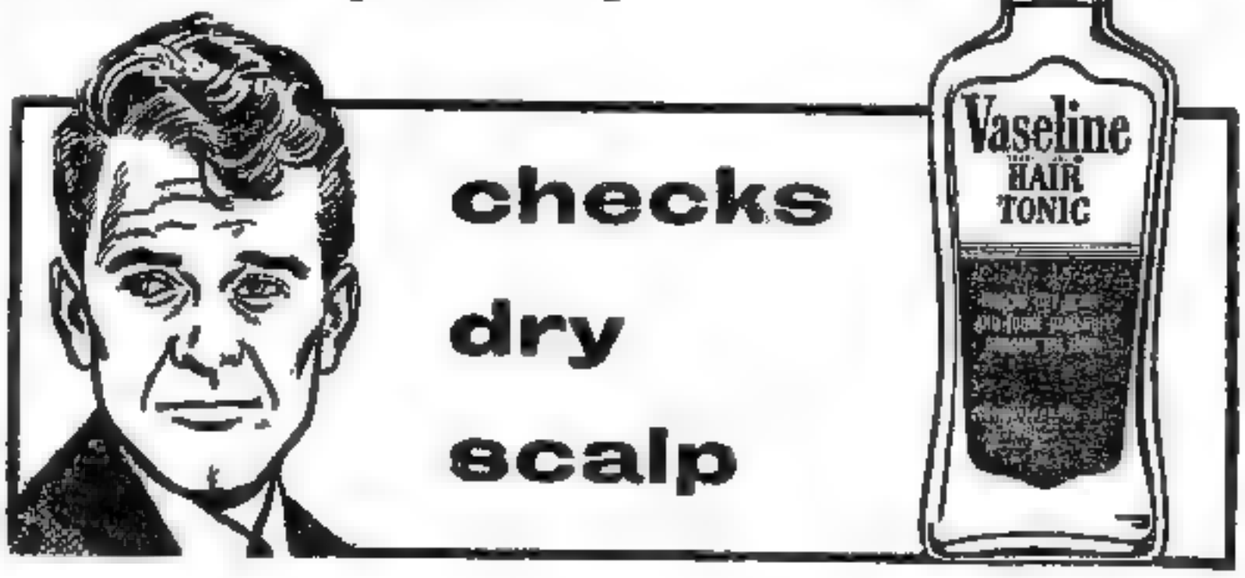

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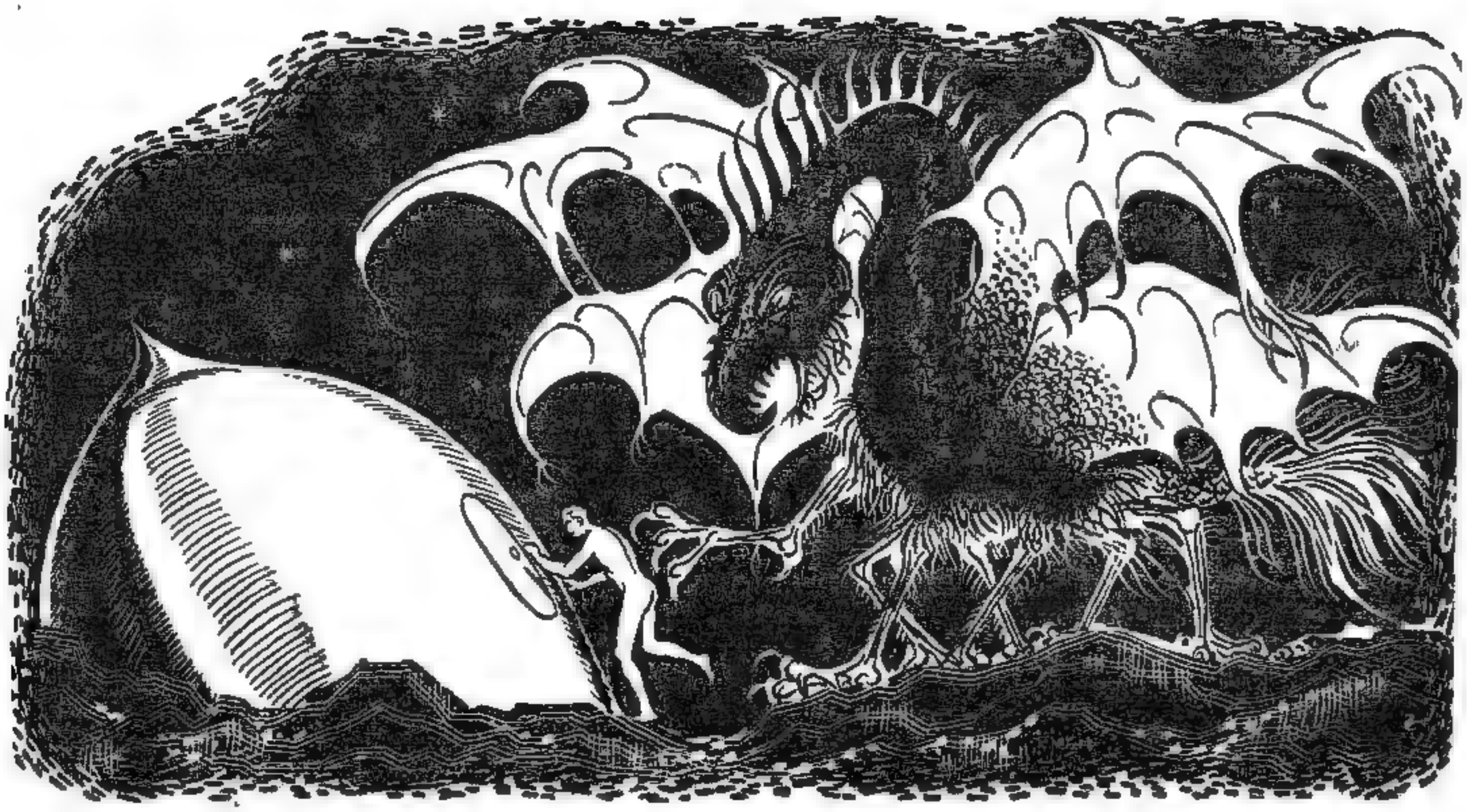

Illustration by EMSH

Welcome, Stranger

By MONROE SCHERE

LONG life to the Meffids!

Now, by ancient custom, I give my death-oration to my fellow Meffids before you dismember me. See, as I talk I beat my strong white wings and wave my remaining talons. With all this and the sight of my gleaming body I give you esthetic pleasure. Like all of you, I lived for beauty. Now I die beautiful —more beautiful than any Meffid has ever been!

Yet some of you, here in this great eyrie on the highest mountain, have not believed my story. Now I tell you again. Let all seventy of you listen well. Let our six little Meffids especially listen well, that they may know how through me the race of Meffids gained undying beauty.

Well then—it is fifty-two days since we saw a flare of light and heard a crash in the sea-marsh. I was one of the group of strong young flyers who went to investigate. Aided by a following wind, we arrived quickly at the sea-marsh. We saw lying there a long, thin shape of gleaming substance, very smooth, with holes at one end. It was very large, and so heavy that it had sunk partly into the soft ground.

It was disaster for the humans, but

a thing of beauty to the Meffids. . . .

We flew about this, admiring our shifting and distorting reflection in its surface. Then an opening appeared in its side and from this opening walked eleven strange creatures. I say 'walked,' for that was their only means of motion. We knew immediately they were a low order of animal, since they had no wings.

These creatures gestured to us and made sounds. They pointed things at us. We landed and allowed them to come reasonably near. They showed us certain odd things—some long, some boxlike—which were of no interest.

Finally they took out a flat surface upon which one of them drew lines in white. He drew a three-sided figure, of which each side formed one side of a four-sided figure. He then indicated by gestures that the larger of the four-sided figures—the one which he had erected upon the longer of the sides of the three-sided figure—was equal to the two smaller four-sided figures put together. This I understood to be so, but it was of little esthetic moment.

Now the creatures put down all their small objects and advanced toward us, talking a kind of language. We spoke back to them, jesting at their ridiculousness. They appeared to be very happy to hear us talk. They came right up to us, holding up a pair of naked forelimbs each. This helped us to observe that, beneath a loose outer covering, they appeared to be well-fleshed.

Therefore we flew quickly at them and picked them up in our talons. At this, a very discordant noise sounded from the big, gleaming object and we saw streaks of fire. Several Meffids fell from the air; we did not find their bodies later. Also, one of the creatures, when we got it to the eyrie, turned out to be dead by reason of a hole through its body. However, we bore away five of the creatures alive.

AS you know, that night we saw a flash from the sea-marsh and heard a roar. The long object disappeared, leaving a smaller replica of itself.

You all remember the intoxicating pleasure of nipping, skinning and dismembering the creatures . . . their strange cries and floppings . . . the shuddering joy of snipping their queer joints . . . the rhythmic, curved patterns made by the red fluid within them as it spilled upon the stones. Ah, that was a day for esthetes! Then we ate well and slept long.

We kept one creature alive in the hope that it would lay an egg and so give us more of its kind with whom we might have another delightful orgy. We wove a strong cage of *tarat* limbs, which soon grew together, to keep the creature safe.

Like the rest of you, I enjoyed clinging to the cage and flying around it. We had made the cage long and narrow, so that we always could reach in and pinch the creature and see the red stuff flow. But we observed this to bring on unconsciousness, so we desisted lest we interfere with its egg-laying.

It is hard to say why I remained interested in this creature for so long. It was I who experimented with various foods for him. I found at last that a diet of sea-marsh slugs and *paroti* seeds appeared to nourish him.

It is even possible that this creature—a third our size, so inferior and so unlearned—made me think of the new life I was soon to father. For I was carrying an egg, as you know. And it has been observed by many wise old Meffids that in his ten years of carrying an egg, any Meffid may do strange things.

You were quite willing to let me stay with the creature and feed him while you went on an expedition to the north, to hunt fur-things. It even occurred to me that this creature might be related to the fur-things because of the fur that began to grow upon its face. However, the thing had only four limbs, and its teeth and claws were rudimentary. You returned with a great haul of fur-things, and there followed that intoxicating time when we enjoyed the exquisite pleasure of hanging them on thorns, of nipping, skinning and at last

dismembering them, while their shrill, weird, musical cries filled the air.

And yet I remained with that creature in the cage.

You see, it actually was trying to teach me its barbaric language! So amused was I that I deigned to imitate its uncouth sounds. When it was hungry, it asked for *fud*. It drank a great deal of the essence of seeds, which it called *joos*. It called itself *eartmon*. By gestures, it indicated it had come from the sky. It took a piece of branch to represent the gleaming thing, and called it *spaysip*. It tried to tell me that the *spaysip* was pushed from the openings it had on one end. It talked a good deal about these push-openings and used words something like *adomickfishn* and *radioackf* and . . . oh, but I bore you with these weird syllables, and you are hungry.

You wish the joy of dismembering my marvelously shining body. You wish to share my beauty, and I will delay but to say with all my heart—

Long life to the Meffids!

Well then, this creature still had upon its body most of that loose covering. It kept on talking to me, if you can call it talking, during the period when the rest of you had the joy of the fur-things . . . and you were kind enough to bring me bits of meat . . . and then it talked to me during the period of delightful mental and physical rest which followed —for the rest of you.

And it was during this time, while you all hung sound asleep upside-down in the shade, that the creature revealed to me a secret of his loose covering. Ah-hah, now you clack your beaks with real interest, my friends!

YOU see, between two layers of this covering, he—I call him "he" because he did have a kind of personality —he had concealed a small, flat, skin-like container filled with a clear liquid. He drank several gulps of this liquid. The effect was astonishing. He leaped about, shouted at me a strange word many times . . . *fetterhedsonabij* as nearly as I can repeat it . . . and climbed here and there about the cage with an appearance of great happiness. In fact, though it seems impossible for so low a form of life, I believe that he really entered into the true esthetic bliss! I was amazed.

Naturally, I wished to test the effect of the fluid upon a higher form. I grabbed his naked fore-limb and made him hold the container out between the bars and spill the liquid into my gullet. Immediately I felt a very warm sensation. Shortly thereafter, my sensations became almost indescribable. Enormous currents of strength and happiness flowed through me. Although my wings did not appear to work in unison, I found myself soaring up, up, so enormously high that I passed the limits of breathing—and yet I flew!

Then down I swooped in the joy of the warming liquid, and seeing at the edge of the great lake an ugly mud-thing, I attacked it. A Meffid fought a mud-thing for the first time in time!

You need not shake your heads, O Meffids. I pinched and tore its tentacles, ripped off its scales in a beautiful silvery shower! I sent it plunging away for its life, down into the deepest mud! Then home I flew, and found I could fly upside-down, an ability never before seen among Meffids. My esthetic joy through the magic liquid was beyond description. Believe me, my friends, I made my mistake later only because I wanted to share this ineffable joy with you.

When I returned to the cage, I felt a slight headache. Nothing to mention. I tore all the covering off the *eartmon*, in search of more of the containers. But he had none. However, by means of gestures and by means of breaking his model he told me that a great deal of the magic fluid was contained in the smaller of the gleaming things—the one which still lay out upon the sea-marsh.

I managed to make known to him that

we would wait until the community awakened. But at this he indicated a negative reaction. He held up a piece of marsh-slug which had lain in the sun and become foul. Thus I understood that the liquid would spoil if it were not obtained immediately.

Therefore I pincered through enough of the *tarat* branches so that the *eartmon* could free himself. I took him up and flew to the sea-marsh.

The smaller gleaming thing still lay there, almost buried. I had to allow the creature freedom in which to attempt to get inside it. He crawled around over its surface. Then a piece of it slid back, revealing an opening. Immediately he leaped inside, and although I reached after him instantly —I could not possibly go through that small hole—the piece slid back with such speed and force that it cut off my foot. I staggered and fluttered in pain.

THEN the marsh around the gleaming thing began to bubble and smoke. Great pieces of marshland flew all about. The gleaming thing lifted and slid. A great roaring and glow came from the openings in its back end. I was not in the direct blast of this glow, but it formed a warm mist all around me. The thing slid upon the marsh grass a little distance, then rose and went upward with great speed and vanished.

The glow stayed behind it for a time, enveloping me in entrancing clouds of beautiful colors. When I breathed deeply of this stimulating mist, I had the marvelous sensation that it was running through all my body.

When I had somewhat recovered, I returned to the eyrie. I found you puzzling over the broken cage. I explained what had occurred—and perhaps it is only now that you believe me!

But certainly, since that time, I have glowed with this wonderful lustre, this new beauty which excites envy and admiration on all sides! Especially in the dark do I shine like a pearly cloud. Am I not beautiful!

You all learned, of course, from my egg that this delicate radiance can be passed on from Meffid to Meffid. My egg was born shining but dead—the wisest among you could not detect a heartbeat —and so our six precious young ones were allowed to eat it among them. Such an extraordinary delicacy to help them grow up to proper strength and fierceness! It was very proper of these lovely children to offer me portions of the egg. But it was equally proper, out of delicacy, for me to refuse.

How delightful it has been to see that eating my egg has imparted to the children a portion of my esthetic radiance! I agree heartily with all of you —the entire race of Meffids must eat me, so that all of you may be radiant . . . even if it be but with a ghost of my original radiance, but the merest flicker in the dark.

You waited till my foot grew again, so I could lead you on the ceremonial hunt that precedes cannibalism. Ah well, my foot grew into an odd sort of twisted thing—the strangest foot that ever grew on Meffid—but with five good feet I climbed well, and with all my good wings I flew well, dodging and ducking a whole day till you caught me.

And now you are ready to eat me, and so eat my beauty and make it yours. And I am ready for your beaks and your talons. Approach and hear me shriek for you. But first—

Tell the generations it was I who was first to glow. I who brought to the Meffids the strange radiance that came from the gleaming thing that held the *eartmon*. Egg by shining egg, let our race move onward to more esthetic wonders.

Long life to the Meffids!

Coming in the Next Issue

THE CAVERN OF THE SHINING POOL by ARTHUR LEO ZAGAT

THE DOUBLE MINDS

Never underestimate the power of a Terran, especially when he sets his mind to working

a novelet by

JOHN W. CAMPBELL, JR.

I

P'HOLKUUN'S coming back," Ted Penton sighed.—"Maybe he meant it."

Rod Blake stirred restlessly on the bunk.

"Will you make your news reports more explicit. You have your mug against the only clear spot on the damn glass door. Which one of those animated beanpoles is P'holkuun?"

"How can I describe him? He's a Ganymedian jailer, to you. They all look alike. Since we are the first human beings ever to see Ganymedians—or Ganymede itself—there aren't any words in the language to describe him. He's seven feet three inches tall, weighs about one hundred and fifty—or he would on Earth. He has that attractive green hair they all have, and he is wearing a Shaloor guard's uniform. He is shooing away our other guard."

"I guess he is as good an orator as you were," Blake grunted. "In five minutes you learned their language, found his political opinions, and had him sold on you to start a revolution. Man, you are political dynamite!"

"Political atomic power," Penton re-

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Illustration by
JOSEPH CONNELL

plied sourly. "I got us kicked out of Terra for experimenting with the stuff. Kick number one; we get in the soup on Mars. Head for home, and all Earth turns out a great welcome for us—twenty-one gun salutes. Only they forgot to take out the sixteen-inch shells. They still don't want us. It was easier here. P'holkuun's a member of the rebel party, and the mind-reading stunt I learned from the Martians helped me make friends with him."

"Penton," suddenly whispered the thin, squeaky voice of the friendly jailer outside, "the Shaloor have investigated your spaceship again. They are afraid."

"They are wise," replied Penton grimly. "If they disturb the atomic balances I have established in the engines, they'll blow this whole satellite clear out of Jupiter's system. They haven't a glimmering of an idea what forces I use."

"They don't believe you. They say you are a liar." The jailer, a Lanoor, sounded doubtful himself.

"They wanted me to take them in it

out into space," went on Penton. "If they knew more about my machine than I do, why don't they build one like it, and go out in their own machine? You don't even have the words atomic power and electricity in your language."

P'holkuun shook his head slowly.

"You do not understand. Ten years ago, the first Shaloor was made. He was a Lanoor, but he invented an operation, and tried it on a friend, then the friend did it to him. The brain is divided into two halves, only one of which ever works in thinking. If, however, a man is injured so the half he is using is destroyed, then the other half works. The Shaloor found out how to make both halves work at once. The brain is made up of thousands and thousands of individual cells, each one helping to think. When the Shaloor doubled the number of thinking cells that work, he became, not twice as brilliant, but over ten thousand times as keen-minded. With two factors, A and B, you can make only two combinations: AB and BA. With twice as many factors, you can make far more than twice as many combinations.

"In ten short years the Shaloor overthrew our rulers, developed a new civilization. They invented the *shleath*, and a thousand new vegetables and new animal foods. They will be able to learn your secret shortly. Some day our rebellion may succeed."

"The Shaloor are not omniscient. You are needlessly afraid of them," Penton snapped.

THE Lanoor's big, broad face split in a slow grin.

"You are in jail, Urd-mahn, thanks to the Shaloor."

"They trapped us by treachery—"

"The Shaloor are always treacherous. It is intelligent, they say."

"They will find it most unintelligent when my people come ten months from now with ships that can wipe out this city in a moment's time. We will so disturb the Shaloor that your waiting rebellion can succeed." Their jailer did not know that they had been exiled from Earth.

"Their gas—their gas always stops us. And the *shleath*. No man can face that—" The guard's ruddy face went pale at the thought, and Penton cursed silently that his very fear made his mind unreadable, even to the ancient method the Martians had learned and recorded ten thousand years ago in the ancient museums he had recently plundered. He could only catch vague, formless jellies wavering in a cloudiness of fear as the mental image.

"We have an older knowledge," Penton said shortly. "But do as you will. We will be out in a day's time, if the Shaloor have not first released the frightful energies of our ship in their blunderings."

"I—I will talk with my comrades tonight," P'holkuun said, and moved down the corridor uneasily. Penton turned away from the little window in the frosted glass of the door. Though his Earthbred strength was five times that of a Ganymedian, it was still far less than was needed to break down the thick, tough glass. Penton looked at it disgustedly.

"Damn," he complained mournfully.

"I take it he said, 'No'." Blake looked morosely at the door. Nice birds they have here. You greet 'em friendly, they wave and grin, and beckon from airplanes while you come down out of space. You step out—and plunko—they trap you with glass bombs of sleep-gas. Ah, well—I can't sleep, I can't smoke and I can't move. I—"

"Oh, shut up. Here, I'll make you sleep. Hypnotism."

"Can you? Say—that's right, you learned a lot of dope from those Martian records. Go ahead." Blake lay back thankfully. Ten seconds later he realized his error. He was helplessly hypnotized, and already he recognized the flood of strange thoughts pouring into his mind, other-wordly ideas. Penton was giving him knowledge of the Lanoorian language by the technique the

Martians had developed ten thousand years ago: hypnotic teaching.

Blake was about to acquire a complete understanding of Lanoor, in about five minutes. Also, all the headaches that he would normally have had learning a language would be equally concentrated into one great-granddaddy of all headaches. He struggled to free his will. . . .

THE sun was shining in through the whole rear wall of the cell, which meant that it was day again, and he had slept for hours.

"No," said Penton's voice. But it was Lanoor who was speaking, and Blake moved his head gingerly and groaned audibly. Yes, the headache was there.

"No, I'll have to make the medicine myself. Tell them Blake is dying, that the air does not suit him. Hear him moan? Tell the Shaloor that I must have that stuff."

Blake saw a shadow, distorted by the uneven glass of the prison wall, move off. Penton turned toward him.

"Excellent, Rod, excellent. Nothing could have been better timed. I didn't know you were awake; and your help was really welcome."

"Help? Help, you cosmic blight! My head."

"I know. But we needed the stuff. Now he'll get it for us. You know their language now—we'll get the stuff I want."

"I've got a headache. Go away and shut up. *Oh-h-h.*"

He dozed, for when he opened his eyes again, his head pained less, and Penton was hard at work with some glass flasks, pungently odorous liquids, and various powders.

"Will you groan," asked Penton pleasantly. "The guard is watching and listening."

Blake obliged. "*Oh-h-h*—what in double blazes—ah-h-h-h—are you stewing. It smells like fury!"

"I'm too busy trying to figure out something. Keep groaning, by the way. This is medicine for you. You're suffering because the atmosphere doesn't suit you. I can stand it, because I've had a dose of this atmospheric-cosmic-telluric acclimatizer."

"Groan, Great God, if it's anything you cooked up, I'm going to recover right here and now. You're no medicine man!"

"I am now. The stuff is now prepared. Hm-m-m—" he passed it under his nose. A mixture of pleasant, fruity smells and peculiarly rank, acrid odors pervaded the room. From a bottle he measured out a number of gritty crystals, then from a second bottle of green glass, a few more. He sniffed the results, tasted it.

"Try a bit," he grinned at last, and passed it over. "Guaranteed to make you lick tigers like lollypops."

Blake took it at arm's length, and sniffed. His eyes widened. He tasted it. His mouth widened in a grin.

"What stuff! Happy days will come again." A considerable portion of the potent brew went down. Blake relinquished it only under protest. "All right, but explain the ingredients."

Penton helped himself to a bit, and nodded.

"Citric acid—crystallized acid of lemmon. Sucrose—commonly sold under the name sugar. Ethanol—otherwise ethyl alcohol. Carbonic acid—in no way related to the one with an 'l' in it—better liked as soda water. I thought the combination might strike you where you needed it, and anyway, I needed the rest of the brew."

Penton looked at, but did not handle, a large flask in which a watery liquid was stirring slowly about a white powder. Fully a gallon of the stuff was there already, and he cautiously added more from a large beaker, and more powder from a glass bottle.

"And that," asked Blake.

"The universal solvent. Anyway, it should get us out of here, I believe. I—"

WITH a soft clank, the large glass block disintegrated, and its contents spewed out over the metal table, and

down the glass wall of the cell. The table had been in a corner, and the adjacent walls and floors were liberally flooded with the deluge. An intense, suffocating odor sprang up at once. Blake pulled his feet off the floor hastily, and looked in dismay at Penton.

"I thought it would," Penton sighed. "It does that."

"What?"

"Be patient, and we'll see. You are supposed to be recovering from a fatal illness. I've got to tell the guard it's according to plan."

The guard was already unlocking the door, for he had seen the deluge. Penton waved his hands.

"Keep out—the vapors—Blake must breathe the vapors!"

The unsuspecting guard had the door somewhat open, but getting the said vapors himself, he promptly decided that Blake was welcome to them and departed.

"Look, Rod, they have just turned on the corridor lights!" explained Penton.

"Which reminds me to ask why you said even before we landed, that they didn't have electricity. Those may not be electric gasglow tubes, but they're certainly one swell imitation."

Penton laughed. "Wrong, two out of two. I said they didn't have electricity before we landed because the instruments on the ship indicated no sign of electric or electro-magnetic energy of any sort produced by man on the whole planet. As for the lamps, electric gasglow tubes are a poor imitation of *them*. Those are biological lamps. They use some kind of a bacterial ferment, and they turn them on by letting air into them. Notice how dark it is already? Small world turning rapidly on its axis, with a thin atmosphere. It will be dark in another quarter hour. Better pack your belongings, because, m'lad, we are going out."

"How? Did P'holkunn finally decide to throw in with us?"

"No, not yet, anyway. I didn't think he would until we got out of here on our own legs. P'holkuun isn't going to ask help from somebody who is tied worse than he is. But—he'll help plenty once we get out of here."

"Yes—but how? Don't tell me we can go out through those solid walls!"

"Yes, through the walls. It's dark enough now, I suppose. Rod, will you wield that hefty hoof of yours against the wall in the neighborhood of that table, while I obscure the window in the door? I would have a chat with our jailer. Don't shake the building, though. You'll go right through the wall."

Blake moved the table. Penton's argument with the jailer was about something impossible, and very loud, but Blake paid little attention because of the way the wall was acting. The clear, hard glass was crumbling under his foot into sand. It broke out in great chunks, and crumbled as though his foot were a pile-driver. In utter surprise he felt his boot sink into the stuff—and through it! In almost no time, Penton had so annoyed the jailer that the man walked down the corridor to avoid Penton's voice, and Penton walked with Blake through the wall of the prison.

"Jupiter will rise in about two hours. When he comes up you won't need to be told, but you will need to be hidden," said Penton. "We appear to the local populace as inconspicuous as a pair of orangutans walking down Fifth Avenue arm in arm. And slightly less harmless. To them our build is the quintessence of horrible, brute strength.

"So when Jupiter's great bulk comes over the horizon, the reflected light is going to make us conspicuous, and not a sight to calm the nerves of nice, old Lanoorian ladies. Further, thanks to P'holkuun's thoughts, I know that our ship is somewhere on the far side of the city. So come on. First we have to get away from this neighborhood."

II

TED PENTON sailed over a twenty-foot wall surrounding the jail, and

Blake found it easy to follow because of the satellite's low gravity.

"What—" he panted after a moment —"is the secret—of the wall—stop running—you fool—I'm winded."

"The air's too thin—to keep—it up," agreed Penton. In the darkness of a tiny alleyway they stopped. "The stuff I used was crotonaldehyde—an organic liquid —derivable from—alcohol. Works on the fact—that glass is not a true—solid."

Blake stared at him, panting.

"Yeah. Stone walls do—not a prison make—nor iron bars a cage. So what is it? That glass wall looked solid enough —it had me bluffed."

"Puffed, did you say? Glass is a liquid. Liquid got so cold it has turned stiff—past the gooey stage. Crotonaldehyde has the curious property of turning it solid. Long heating and cooling does it too, that's why kerosene lamp-chimneys used to get so fragile. Solid glass is extremely brittle and as strong as so much sand. When that stuff turned it solid it took all the strength out of it. We have to steal a car. Damn. No running or we will pant so loud they'll hear us a block away. They have cars. There ought to be one around here somewhere, and let us pray they haven't invented locks for 'em."

They covered six blocks before they saw a rounded, bulky lump in the road that was evidently an automobile.

"You drive, Rod," Penton said softly. "You are a better driver than I, and a better mechanic. Can you figure it out?"

"Lord help us, no! Is it electric? No. Steam? Compressed air? Gasoline? Diesel? How in blazes should I know? Where's the engine? Both ends look alike. I have never seen anybody drive one, and I don't even know which end is front. Is this one a steering lever, and —well, what's that other one back there? I—" the car jerked ahead suddenly.

"Oh," said Penton, "you do know how to start it."

Blake was too busy hanging on. He held the lever in his hand, and pulled. "What do I do to stop it?" He tried pushing the lever. The car showed capabilities of speed. He pressed in a different direction. The car stopped accelerating but by no means slowed down. The quite accidental fact that the road was straight helped considerably. His foot felt feverishly for a brake pedal—and the car swerved aside into a pole.

"I think," said Penton, bending the door frame out of his way, "that they probably have a more comfortable, if no more effective means of stopping them. They can't have light poles everywhere. We had better hurry elsewhere. Someone will certainly investigate that crash. Anyway, the next car we try, you'll know they steer with their feet, and not try to jam on the brakes with the steering gear."

"The next one," said Blake clearly, "you will know they steer with their feet. And I'm going to take time out to find out how in blazes they work. I just took hold of that handle—and away she went. No starter—nothing!"

Six blocks away they found another car, not exactly like the first, but similar, seven seats instead of five. Blake looked at Penton.

PENTON hesitated, and looked about him. Surrounding warehouses loomed, dark masses against a star-studded sky. A tiny, bright moon rode high in the sky, and lower was another, even smaller. Giant worlds, as large as the planet they rode, but millions of miles distant in Jupiter's titanic gravity field. But their light was enough to show dim alleyways and fences made of wire and some woven, fibrous stuff.

"Right, Rod. Check the control system and let it go," Penton said softly.

Five seconds later Blake was in and after a few more moments of swift examination he started from the curb. The machine started with a swift, smooth rush, and the soft whirr of the blowers and pumps was the only sound from the engine. Rapidly Blake got the feel of the apparatus, the two steering

pedals, the lever that controlled its speed by increase or relaxation of pressure on the grip. Relaxed, it became a brake of fair power; squeezed, the car shot forward with amazing acceleration.

"All right. I have it now. We need lights, and I didn't figure them out. They must have a dash control."

Penton worked swiftly over the dash with the aid of the hand flash he carried. Suddenly lights blazed on, and Blake sped on his way with more assurance.

Blake squeezed harder on the control, and the silent engine behind drove the car forward with a powerful, steady push. Rapidly, fully forty miles an hour, they cruised through the deserted district. The street that had led them straight toward their goal came to an end, and Blake hesitated at the curve, muttering at the inefficient brake system. Then he went right. Presently, on a more traveled street, he went left. More cars were about them.

AS THEY headed toward the city, traffic became heavier, and Blake anxiously watched the system, trying to learn the rules of the road. They drove on the left, moving at a lively clip.

"They have traffic lights," said Penton quietly. "I just spotted the damn things. It's a block system, like New York's. See—way up ahead you can see that yellow light. That's stop. Red is go. We'll have to stop at this next block."

But traffic became heavier. Lights became confusing. And suddenly a bright flush crept over the sky, and almost immediately Jupiter loomed on the skyline. Five blocks later they were hopelessly caught in a traffic jam in the heart of the city. Drivers near them looked—and left. Beside them they had seen, driving a car, two monstrous, squat beings, with great ropes and bundles of inhuman muscles. To them they appeared like horrible animals incredibly become intelligent.

Blake opened his door.

"All off here. Transfer. Last stop. We can't drive through those stalled cars, and somehow, I don't think the drivers are coming back." Penton got out the other side, and silently they walked up the line of traffic. Behind them doors opened hastily, and feet scuttled away. Blake crept up beside the leading car, a gleaming, seven-passenger sedan, and rose abruptly at the driver's window. He looked quietly at the occupant. A grey-headed Lanoor stared back, and slowly his eyes closed. He shook his head and opened them very wide, then beat it.

Penton climbed in first, and Blake took the late occupant's seat.

"The lights have changed," Penton said. They made nearly fifteen blocks. Then they changed cars again, taking the first car in the line. Twelve blocks later they were again forced to walk up the line—and a dozen glass bubbles of sleep-gas crackled around them. Blake leapt upward, to the top of a car, and crashed through into the seat. He settled back in sleep before he could extricate himself.

Penton, who had started down the road in great leaps, looked back—and leaped faster. A two-foot thick, doughy mass was rolling of its own volition in his direction. He turned down a side street and increased his pace. He began to jump from side to side but it caught up with him.

IT WAS soft, and squashy, but rubbery. It simply clung about his feet, and crept slowly up and over his legs, up his body, while he tore great holes in the doughiness that persistently grew together again. Desperately he drove his hand into his pocket while the Lanoor police ran toward him with their slow, exaggerated strides, gas bombs in hands. A glass bulb arched forward, but fell short of him.

Then his hand came free with the flashlight as the crawling, doughy stuff crept about his other arm. An instant later the thing was bouncing and bound-

ing down the street, from side to side, throwing itself in all directions, smashing down the rapidly approaching Lanoor, and rebounding with evident terror. Somehow the flashlight had driven it away.

Penton loped leisurely into an alley, and after several blocks of leaping fences, circled back. A crowd of Lanoor guardsmen were carefully roping Blake. The Earthman lay inert in the roadway with his head thrown back, heavy snores gurgling forth. Penton walked as near as he felt was reasonably safe, and looked. An empty car stood nearby. He headed for it. It was a light roadster, and after some calculations he started it in the direction of Blake. The Lanoor guardsmen peppered it with glass bubbles; two doughy things tried to mesh its powerful wheels and were torn up, only to reform accidentally as one large one. The guardsmen scattered as the car rolled quietly forward and coasted to a stop.

Blake had already begun to stir, and Penton stopped. Evidently his previous exposure to the gas seemed to confer a semi-immunity. Methodically he released his friend. "I think," said Penton, thoughtfully, "that it is time to seek lodging for the day. This looks like a pleasantly dilapidated section."

III

PENTON looked down the shabby street. His view was restricted somewhat, because even though it was the widest of numerous sad cracks in the even sadder wreck that had once been a house and now sheltered them, it was narrow. A Lanoor was walking down the far side, stumbling through a series of dreary mud puddles in a peculiarly automatonlike way. Abruptly he halted stock still in the center of an unusually well developed puddle and shook his head slowly. It weaved about dangerously on the pipe-stem neck, and the shabbily dressed giant looked dazedly about him. After a while he started on vaguely, a gradual deepening of purpose putting increasing firmness in his gangling walk.

Penton sighed and turned away. He nodded to Blake and sat down.

"He's started. He did just what I ordered him to. Unless some Shaloor for some impossible reason picks that one man out of all the city to practice hypnotism on, those hypnotic orders I gave him are going to work, and he will bring P'holkuun here. It ought not to take more than an hour."

"But will he come? And will it do any good if he does? He didn't help us before," protested Blake.

"He will for two reasons. The chances are the Shaloor won't know that trick about crotonaldehyde—I used something else, a catalyst that intensified the action—and they are going to be mighty mystified as to how in Nine Planets and Great Spaces we took the starch out of that wall. They'll be even more worried about the way that doughball they sicced on me backfired when I used the flashlight. He'll come, and he will probably help, now that we have shown him we can do something the Shaloor can't. I think we have an hour to wait."

They actually had less than an hour. A small roadster came slowly up the street, and stopped four or five doors away. The tall Lanoor got out. With some trepidation, evidently, he came over and cautiously opened the door.

"Come in, P'holkuun. You are a welcome sight."

"You've caused a great deal of trouble," the Lanoor greeted them. "The Shaloor have posted many guards about the palace; it has made any hope of a revolution useless for some time. They have taken the sleep-gas throwers away from the Lanoor guards, leaving them only swords. And the *shleath* are all locked up."

"Is a *shleath*," asked Penton thoughtfully, "a doughy thing without any legs, but possessed of a peculiarly unpleasant odor, and a miraculous slime?"

"No," the Lanoor sighed. "You have

no idea of what *shleath* are. Those were *grethlanth* they turned on you last night. The *shleath* are fifty feet in diameter, but otherwise much like those things. The Shaloor are still very much puzzled by the way the *grethlanth* ran away from you. They are fearless, and never before have they run from a prisoner."

Penton smiled, grimly.

"That, my friend, was electricity. It was one of the forces the Shaloor have not guessed. Here, moisten your two fingers like this, and touch this little metal piece." Penton illustrated the action, and the Lanoor hesitatingly touched the terminals of the flash. Instantly he jumped three feet backward and fell.

SLOWLY he sat up, shaking his head, while Penton and Blake looked at each other curiously.

"That—that is horrible! Put it away!" gasped the Lanoor. "It made all my muscles writhe into knots. It made my heart contract as though a giant had squeezed it. It is horrible!"

"It is electricity," said Penton slowly, "and you seem to be very sensitive to it, much more so than we are. Now, what did you say a *shleath* was?"

"It is a great mass of protoplasm jelly which obeys readily the will of its controller," replied P'holkuun, rubbing his arm, and eyeing the flash uneasily. "It cannot be killed, because if part is poisoned that part is split off. If it is shot or cut, that does no harm. It is not affected by sleep-gas. It is immensely strong, and can assume any form. The Shaloor conquered the Lanoor rulers originally by sending *shleath* up a small drain pipe in the form of a thread of protoplasm, and having it assume the form of a roller in the barred and defended fortress where the Lanoor rulers were. The *shleath* digest anything the Shaloor want them to. They can dissolve even metal. Only glass is impervious to them. If there is even a ventilation hole, the *shleath* can seep through."

"How many are there?"

"Thousands. They use them as work animals when need be, because they can seep under a heavy stone, girder, or mass of metal, and gradually all come under it so that the mass is lifted. Or they can hang down as a sticky cable from a high place, wrap around the stone, and contract to lift it. If an ordinary *shleath* is not strong enough, four or a hundred devour each other and form one big one, and that does the work. In the last revolt, a thousand *shleath* made a ring around the whole Lanoor army, and contracted till they were just one lump. The army was then part of the *shleath*."

Blake looked fixedly at Penton.

"I think," he said in English, "we'd best find the shortest route for another planet. I don't like the sound of these overstuffed amoebae. But I'd love to stack them up against the Martian *thushol*. Couldn't that pair have a time?"

"We'll have to get to the ship, P'holkuun. Then we can use its power to defeat your enemies."

The Lanoor shifted his feet, and looked across the room.

"The ship," he said finally, "has been moved to the palace. Twenty *shleath* did that last night. The Shaloor knew that you would make for the ship, so they put it where they could make sure you didn't get it. They are all in the palace, and they have the ship in the inner courtyard. That is the place we call the court of the *shleath*. I do not know how you will get your ship. Maybe you could make magic on a Shaloor as you did with the strange man you sent to me. The Shaloor are working to make defences, because they are afraid of you. They are even more afraid of the ship, so they have not touched it. If you can make a Shaloor do as the Lanoor you sent to me did, perhaps you can get the *shleath* out of the way. But no Lanoor can move them; they cannot be imprisoned; they never die."

"Can you feed them until they are groggy?"

"No, they just break up into more *shleath*, so there are twice as many and twice as hungry."

PENTON looked slowly at Blake. "If you don't like the *shleath*, maybe we better decide to stay here for a while," he sighed at length. "You are sure there were not any left-over *thushol* on the ship? One of those Martian beasts might seriously distract the Shaloor just now."

"When Greek meets Greek," sighed Blake. "I'd love to see what would happen if an angry *shleath* met a Martian *thushol*. Would the *thushol* turn into an indigestible rock, or would he imitate a bigger *shleath* and eat the one that had attacked him? It is a beautiful, theosophical problem as to why the Lord ever let anything like that exist—"

"He didn't. The Shaloor invented the *shleath*, and from what the Martians told us, the *thushol* invented themselves. You know, Ted, back on Mars old Loshthu told us all about the *thushol*. Rearrange the letters in his name and they practically spell *thushol!* I'll bet he really was one of them, and was laughing up his sleeve at us all the while! But that's not the point. The idea is to get inside the ship without getting inside a *shleath.*" He turned to the Ganymedian. "P'holkuun, can you start the rebellion?"

"Not until you can stop the *shleath*," answered the Lanoor firmly. "The rest of my people won't even talk rebellion until they are sure they won't be used for tid-bits. You have never had a fifty-foot glob of jelly scrunch down on your best friend, and watched the expression of horror fade from his face because his face was dissolving out from under the expression."

"P'holkuun, sit down a minute. I want to think," said Penton gustily, as he squatted cross-legged on the floor. "I have to find out what part of our science will beat your science. I know there is some item. Tell me things. Can you or your men get across to a metal-worker's shop? A place where there are all kinds of metals? And can you make there for me, many hundreds of small, metal machines? They will be simple, but I know a thing of science that will, I think, save you from further trouble with the *shleath.*"

"We can get some metals. Not the yellow metal, or the heavy kingly metals. Only Lanoor work in the metal shops, so we can make machines, if they are simple enough, and small enough to conceal."

"Good. Bring me, as soon as possible, a sample of all the different metals you can find. And—one of those doughy things—a *grethlanth*—that the police set on me the other night. Can you do it?"

"Yes," said P'holkuun, somewhat doubtfully. "But can you do anything?"

Penton smiled. "Friend, when I get into that sacred court of theirs, the Shaloor are going to come out of the palace faster than they have ever before moved. I shall want only about a dozen courageous Lanoor; all the rest of the rebels will stay well outside the palace and catch the Shaloor as they come out. They will come out very rapidly. And I would not advise any of your people to remain within six blocks of the palace."

"They couldn't anyway. The Shaloor live all about the palace. If you are sure—"

Blake lay down gently in the corner after P'holkuun went. He was tired. The atmosphere of the little planet was enervating. Furthermore, he only half believed in Penton, and Penton became as communicative as the surrounding walls.

Blake slept. He slept quite peacefully until he was startled from his sleep by queer chirpings, cracklings and loud bumpings. He sat up, only to be knocked flat by a massive, doughy affair that smacked into him, and swooshily dropped over his shoulder. Laboriously he struggled up again and looked at the

dirty-gray mass that was cavorting crazily about the floor in the dim light of dusk.

EVIDENTLY P'holkuun had come and gone, and had supplied Blake with a *grethlanth.*

Penton was dashing madly about the floor picking up something, while the unspeakable dirty-whiteness was dashing about twice as madly—and abruptly dashed out of the window shrieking and gurgling unhappily.

"Well—maybe it's—all for the—best. That's hard work—here. Bending like that."

"What in the name of the Nine Wavering Worlds got into the thing?" asked Blake. "It acted as though the floor were red hot, and every time it hit it jumped higher."

"Copper," said Penton, "and magnesium. I wondered what pH value their metabolism used. Evidently it's greater than seven rather than less. But zinc does well enough, and they can get that. Copper though is expensive."

"It may make sense, but I don't see it. Where's P'holkuun?"

"Coming back now. His men were stationed outside to catch that thing when it got loose. I—here he is."

P'holkuun stuck his great head in. He looked about the very dimly lighted room.

"It went out very quickly. I thought it might have broken away and succeeded in attacking you as we had ordered it. The men have chased it two blocks now, and it is still going very rapidly. It refuses to obey at all."

"That's fine," Penton smiled. "Did it attack anyone?"

"The first one who tried to stop it. It simply rolled over him, and hastened away. What is this weapon?"

"Make me as many hundreds of these machines as you possibly can. P'holkuun, and I will take the palace with a dozen Lanoor."

Penton held out a web of wiring, a pancake of interwoven coppery and silvery wires nearly eighteen inches across. The intricate hookup of wires led into a small, solid, egg-shaped mass at the heart of the network, an ovoid of black, plastic material.

"You can make a great many, I think. And remember to make that whole device exactly as I have, changing no slightest detail, particularly as to the constitution of the central mass. Is it understood?"

"I will." P'holkuun looked somewhat wide-eyed at the savage little device that had sent the utterly fearless, nerveless defender of the Lanoorian peace scuttling out the window in such terror that it absolutely refused to obey orders.

IV

P'HOLKUUN halted. Ahead, the narrow corridor cut through the solid rock turned, and beyond the turn it was a passageway lined with cut stone mortared in place.

"We enter the palace soon. No Lanoor is supposed to know of this corridor, as I say, and to prevent suspicion, the Shaloor station no Lanoor guards, and do not so much as guard it themselves. But they have men watching this night beyond that wall. They are suspicious—almost know that rebellion is starting. For four days now, you have been free, and they have not heard from you, have seen no sign of your existence. They believe you have obtained help, but they have received no word of a general uprising. And—" he looked at Penton from the corner of his eyes, rather doubtfully —"they know that no dozen men can take their palace, or menace them."

"Yes. They also know that no man can stand against a *shleath,* or any save a Shaloor order him. They know a great many things. A most surprising number of those things are all wrong. Is there a door ahead?"

"Yes. Locked, with a heavy steel bolt. But—you said you could open that."

Penton smiled and nodded to Blake. Blake shifted two dozen of the flat, wov-

en webs he carried to the dozen or so Lanoor who had accompanied them, each man rearranging the webs he already carried to take on the extra. Then the Earthman went forward.

The door was a secret panel on the other side, but from here it was obvious enough. A panel of thick, dense wood, a dark green, no doubt polished beautifully on the other side that opened into the main hall of the palace.

But from this side it was rough, and studded with locking mechanisms. Two heavy steel hinges supported it, and a series of three steel bars a half inch thick, operated by levers in the manner of a bank-vault lock, held it in place with all the rigidity of the surrounding wall. No careless hand could detect it from the far side.

Blake wrapped his fingers about the bars, braced his feet solidly, and pulled slowly, with greater and greater force. The mild steel gave under the strain, and slowly the bar backed out of the socket that held it.

JUST before it was free Blake transferred his attention to the second, and then to the third. The Lanoorians listened to his panting breath, and watched the writhing muscles in silent awe. The Earthman was to them as unnatural as a superintelligent gorilla would be to us.

Blake backed off and rested, till his heavy panting in the thin air of the little planet quieted. Finally he stood up again, and nodded.

"Ready, I guess. Now, once more, what will we have to look out for, P'holkuun?"

"They have guns, mostly air-powered guns. They are almost noiseless, there is no smoke, the source of the shot cannot be detected. But they will not shoot through heavy cloth. The explosion guns do. First they will try the sleep-gas, until they see that we are immune, thanks to your discovery that a series of five doses made a man safe. Then—the White Flowers."

"Just what are the White Flowers?" asked Penton.

P'holkuun shrugged his shoulders.

"They used it only once. They are afraid of it themselves, so they will be reluctant to try it. It is a mold that turns a healthy man into a moldering, putrescent corpse in thirty seconds. The flesh falls from his bones in white lumps. And anything that touches him, or passes near, within thirty hours—follows him! So, if you see a man turn white, and hear his scream—there is no need to help such a one. Leave him quickly. And we must go quickly now. I know the way we are to go, all my men here do. You must stay with us; if you cannot, seek the innermost court."

"Good. Go ahead, Blake," said Penton. "I'll take the lower half." Together, the two Earthmen approached the door, and took hold. The steel bars popped from their sockets with a vast droning clatter, to vibrate like plucked reeds. Immediately the two men jumped through the opened door, the Lanoorians behind them. The great central hall was bright with the glowlights, and a half-dozen Shaloor were streaking across the room toward them, drawing their gas-guns as they came.

A shrill cry was spreading through the palace, echoing from room to room. Feet began running in unseen passages, and somewhere women's shriller voices called out. Two Lanoor servants appeared momentarily, their eyes opening in surprise at the sight, then narrowing in sudden concentration as they vanished into familiar passages.

Blake's arm flung back. A rounded, nicely weighted stone flew from it with the super Lanoorian force a Terrestrial could give it. An attacking Shaloor doubled with a howl of pain and an instant later another fell with a little groan, the side of his head crushed in. Gas bombs fell about them as P'holkuun lead the way to a branching, wood-paneled corridor on the far side of the room.

"They will concentrate to defend the inner court, since it is known that you

have come," P'holkuun called back. "Hurry."

A pair of Lanoorians had spread out behind them, and their swords were flashing in efficient butchery. The Shaloor were vanishing now, into the various rabbit-warren passages.

P'holkuun led them at a sharp run down the passage, past a dozen intersecting warrens and into a smaller passage.

"P'holkuun!" a strange low voice warned softly. "Not that way, the gates will close. Turn aside. The third—right." Feet vanished. P'holkuun halted in indecision.

"I wonder if that was a Shaloor?" he asked unhappily.

"It was my cousin!" exclaimed one of the Lanoor. "He is a secretary—"

They took the third to the right.

"But I am lost now," P'holkuun muttered. "I do not know this route. Why didn't he join us to help—"

From a room on one side a Lanoor stepped out.

"You'd probably have shot me by mistake. Come." The man had two of the air-guns, and a blood-stained sword. "They are gathered to defend the great inner court. They have closed all entrances with steel grills, save the one that they want you to take, the *S'logth* gate. That is open—open for the *shleath*. What do you hope to do?"

"Lead us there," Penton smiled. "The sooner we reach the *shleath*, the better. What weapons have they?"

THE Lanoor shifted his slight weight to his right foot.

"Some strange things they found on the ship of the strangers. A little thing, like a pistol, or sleep-gas thrower. But it throws nothing, only light, and not bright light at that. A Shaloor died handling it, and they made two Lanoor find out the secret. Now they have twenty. There is another thing they will use if they must, but they fear it, for none of us have been able to make it work without terrific explosions. But the explosions destroy what they hit, so they may use it even so."

"Damn," said Penton softly. "They can stop the *shleath* with the ultra-violet pistols. And the atomic bullet guns. They might go so far as to attack the ship with them. Not even the ship could stand one of those atomic bullets. Thank heaven they're still more afraid of them than we are. All we can do is try. They won't know just what they are doing, and we may still get away with it."

"Lead the way, man."

Again they started, through more devious, involved passages than they had taken before. Through rooms where Lanoor servants looked, saw them, and looked blindly away, through rooms where startled Lanoor women rose angrily from sleep, and quieted with a grim smile as they saw who invaded their rooms. Down narrow corridors, through smoking kitchens. Down a long corridor—

"No, I tell you, no!" a Lanoor's voice barked in exasperation. "They have not come this way. Why should they? They will go some other way if they have a particle of sense, and they will go entirely away if they know what I know." And then came the angry curses of a Shaloor. Abruptly they dived into a side lane, and P'holkuun grinned.

"The Shaloor cannot hear well. Nor see, for all of that. But the Lanoor hear us."

"P'holkuun! Who—ah, it is you," the Lanoor's voice continued. "They are waiting for you at the gate now with three *shleath* in hiding. Go back. You must try at some other time. The city has heard, and it is roaring with rebellion. The shaloor are preparing to bring out the lion, as the crowd grows outside the palace. But go back. They are ready for you, and they have a new weapon."

P'holkuun looked at the new Lanoor recruit uneasily.

"Did you hear that, Earthman?" he asked Penton.

"Did you hear of the new weapon, La-

noor?" returned Penton. "Do you think they will ever know less than they know now? Be less ready to meet you with strange weapons? Do you think you can ever have a better chance than with the men who invented the weapons you fear? And know more about them than all the Shaloor on the planet? If ever in time you have a breath of hope, you have it now. Come on before that breath expires." Penton started on down the corridor. "And you don't have to worry about the *shleath*. They will be more worry to the Shaloor than to you."

"Then stop. That is the door that leads to the hall of the S'logth gate. If you open the door, the *shleath* will be in here at once."

"What is out there, then?" Blake demanded.

"There are, apparently, three *shleath*, and the Lord of Worlds only knows how many Shaloor, waiting to shoot, gas, bomb, and kill us in every other conceivable way."

"Where are the Shaloor?"

"They will be in the high gallery. The *S'logth* gate goes up three stories, but we are on the first, since only thus can one enter the inner courtyard. They will be on the second and third galleries, and they will be watching for us. We cannot enter here until, somehow, the Shaloor are driven out."

"How do we get to the third floor gallery, then?"

P'HOLKUUN looked to the Lanoor secretary who had joined them, Tathuol. The man shook his head.

"I can try. But it will do little good, since there we will be unable to reach and enter the gate we should pass through, because we can't reach the floor. And the Shaloor may have the steel grills in the way."

"If I once get my hands on one of the weapons they stole from our ship," said Blake grimly, "all the Shaloor on the planet, and all the *shleath*, steel grills, stone walls and assorted animals and plants won't stop me. Just get me near one of those Shaloor."

The way was a winding, climbing corridor, and it led them through back rooms and twisting flights of stairs. It led them up trap-doors in closets, and in impossible ways. Finally Tathuol halted.

"That is the door. There will be half a hundred Shaloor waiting for us out there."

"Don't disappoint them, then. Come on!" Penton yanked the door and jumped out, low. Fully the promised fifty Shaloor turned toward him, raising their guns. Instantly the walls were peppered with shot, and, with a queer hissing, droning hum, a beam of pale, deepest violet stabbed through the air. Not toward Penton, but across the great hallway to a hanging balcony on the far side! Someone howled in agony there, and together, Blake and Penton charged down the hundred foot length of the balcony.

It was only some twenty feet wide, and between them, with P'holkuun in effective action, the balcony was cleared in less than fifteen seconds. Cleared, for the Shaloor jerked and moved on the courtyard floor, eighty feet below.

Penton stared about him. Across the courtyard, four similar balconies hung at the same level, and four more below. On his right, on this same side, another balcony hung to the dark stone wall, and two more on the left. Four below him. The great ceiling arched low above his head, studded with hundreds of glowing lights. And in the great hall below, three monstrous things pulsed and staggered, three things like green, gold and purple amoebae fifty feet in diameter.

They were surging and wavering madly, and then suddenly they stopped and ran together. Horribly they merged into a single, frightful mass of pulsing, nauseous flesh. An oozing, angry mass of protoplasm, it charged for the wall, and miraculously sent a vast finger of jelly-stuff sprouting swiftly upward, past the balcony, toward them!

Abruptly, Penton heard the clanking sounds of dropped metal, soft moans of terror, and scampering feet. The Lanoor were leaving. Only P'holkuun and a half dozen others stood, whitefaced, beside the Earthmen. "The *shleath*—coming—" said P'holkuun stiffly.

Penton crouched. The wall of the balcony, some four feet high, was carved with an intricate design of flowers and trees, and intricate spaces cut through the stone. There was an angry silence in the court. Only the soft, horrible, *shluffing*, slobbering sounds of that vast monstrosity climbing the wall. It had dwindled to a twenty foot thing of green jelly with a purple, angry bruiselike knot in its middle, with golden thread shot through it. But up the stone wall, to within a few feet of the balcony, the questing mustard-green, pseudopodal arm clung tenaciously to the minute grips it found. Penton crouched and waited, peering through the tiny holes.

"Pick up three of those webs, Blake," said Penton, softly. "And wait until that thing reaches up here."

SOMEHOW P'holkuun made himself move. He handed Penton a half dozen of the flimsy, interwoven webs of silver and copper wires. They looked like metal spider webs with black, rubbery spiders clumped at their centers.

Then the vast arm reached up to the balcony. Thick fingers of slime reached through the openings of the balcony wall, and waved with a horrible suggestion of individual, hateful life. The great, green wave curled smoothly over the wall, and sprouted thick tentacles that stabbed out toward the Earthman as he rose. In his hand the flash, with its projecting, copper terminals, blackened by the burning arc that had fused the lock, gleamed dimly.

He thrust his hand toward one of those jelly-ropes, and braced as the thing clamped viscously about him. Then he pressed the button that shot fifty volts of powerful current into the vast mass of protoplasm.

Somehow it screamed. The city quieted to that ineffable shriek. An unspeakable hatred was in it, and an indescribable terror. The rope turned livid yellow, and contracted so swiftly that the mass on the floor jerked half-way up the wall to meet it, and fell with a liquid, splashing plop. The mass heaved; it split into three separate pieces, then half a dozen, and they all howled.

Accurately, Penton tossed one of the metal webs so that it fell onto the center of one of the pulsing, writhing things on the floor. The *shleath* shrieked with the same unspeakable, evil hatred, and the same awful terror, but somehow it whined; it begged. It scuttled into a corner and cowered there.

And another one of the blind, terror-stricken things touched the spider of black, and gold and silver. It leaped five feet into the air, and splintered on the floor. The great *shleath* split into a hundred tiny things that rolled and scuttled and bounded with little evil squeaks of terror as they accidentally touched the black spider.

The larger ones were coming under control. Reluctantly, angrily they moved about, incorporating the smaller ones into their vast bulks. They joined again to two vast masses that charged for the wall. Penton dropped another of the webs. Then. in swift succession, two more.

THERE was point to their anger now. They howled, but they howled with directed anger. From the horrible stinging balcony they turned to the masters that drove them on. A wave of slime engulfed the lower balcony directly below the Earthmen. Penton watched the struggling Shaloor turn horribly red as their mouths gaped open in the thick, transparent jelly. They turned red, and stained the green about them, and struggled jerkily, then feebly; and through the clouding redness that grew in the green jelly, vague, shadowy things that might have been white bone here, or bared vital organs there, began to show.

Penton turned away. The *shleath* was stretching out an arm toward the nearby balcony below, where milling Shaloor shot hissing pistols at it, and finally—something white blossomed in the greenness. The *shleath* seemed to suck in the whiteness and engulf it, but the white splotch grew, and spread with an awesome rapidity. The *shleath* writhed and spewed out the mass of white and green life stuff. Then the rope looped out again.

Softly violet, softly humming, the beam of one of the stolen pistols stabbed from the balcony. It struck the courtyard below, and wandered wildly, erratically about while the wave of green washed over the balcony. Again a white splotch blossomed, and again. Twice the thing spit them forth with masses of its own stuff. Then the white blossomed on an infected Shaloor, and he fell screaming, tearing at his leg, as the stuff whirled through his veins. He writhed over the edge of the balcony, and lay beside the white tufts of ejected tissue from the *shleath* turning as white as they, and growing soft and downy.

V

ABRUPTLY the wildly wavering beam of the UV pistol snapped out. Tensely Penton watched as a pseudopod of the *shleath* lapped up a Shaloor. The one with the stolen weapon seemed to be concentrating, his brows wrinkled in fear-filled thought. With both hands, he held the pistol, and abruptly swept it around the *shleath*. It exploded into flare, and the *shleath* howled in agony again. Dense, nauseous smoke welled up from the flaring spot where the ultraviolet-beam tore into it, bubbling horribly. The thing dropped from the balcony, splitting into a hundred parts as it fell.

Blake spoke softly.

"I've been usefully engaged. There are about fifty less Shaloor. They have been too busy to watch, and these guns work. There was only one UV pistol here, and that went over the edge with one of the Shaloor."

"P'holkuun, you said they couldn't see?" Penton asked softly. "What do you mean?"

"They can see. But they don't point right. They never drive, they never fly planes, they seldom write or do experiments themselves. We do not understand fully. But there is something the matter with their eyes."

"Thank God for that," said Penton. "I think I know what it is. They've joined the two halves of the brain, and are far more brilliant than any creature has a right to be, but they pay for it. Only one half the brain does all the thinking. That's true enough. But both halves see, and both halves hear. Both halves help with moving the body about. Somehow, when they cross those two halves of the brain for greater keenness, they see double. They probably hear double too. They can't co-ordinate arm and eye well. They forced themselves to move a bit, but they can't make themselves see straight.

"They are more intelligent, no doubt of that, for they have more UV guns than we made. They figured out that unknown system to that extent in one week's time. But they not only see double, but by some physchological trick, they see the wrong image best! They missed us when we appeared suddenly. That Shaloor that tried to kill the *shleath* with the UV gun shot up all the court but for the spot where the creature was. They can't move quickly, and they can't see straight. That gives us a far better chance, and changes my plans a bit. P'holkuun, can we get somewhere where we can throw the webs into the inner court? Let's finish the job."

Tathuol nodded.

"Yes. Come." He led them back, through twisting corridors, through rooms where terrified Lanoor whispered and asked questions. They had heard the screams of the maddened *shleath*. The news was spreading. Then they

reached a barred gate, a grillwork of locked bars that closed off the corridor. Beyond it they looked into a great courtyard a quarter of a mile across. The vast ramifications of the palace surrounded it on every side. And in it half a hundred of the giant *shleath* wavered and stirred uneasily, crowding down at the gate beyond which they had heard the strange shrieks of their fellows.

Somehow those giant masses of jelly had a brain and understanding. And they were restless. The glow-lamps cast only dim sparkles of light on hulking masses of greenish jelly. And, out in the middle of the court, silver metal on the *Ion*, the ship that had brought Penton and Blake to this world, glistened faintly.

"Oh, for the wings of an angel! How in blazes are we going to get there?" Blake mourned.

PENTON began tossing the black and silver and gold of the spiders methodically through the bars. One—five—a dozen. Some fell short, some long of their mark. It was hard to aim at an angle on a light world of unfamiliar gravity. Then two in quick succession landed.

"Back—back to the entranceway where we can get into the courtyard," Penton yelled over the shrieks of the two monsters. A giant began stamping. The whole palace shook to the thud of his tread. Then it stopped. Human feet began running somewhere, and the shouts of the Shaloor pierced the roaring that came from the inner court. Penton hesitated. Then he gathered all the spider webs, and threw them into the yard below, spinning them all over the court. Dozens of them skimmed into the night to fall with soft, clinking rustles. Three times he scored hits. But now restless, wandering *shleath* were accidentally touching the stinging electric traps.

The radiating copper and zinc wires reaching out from the rubber egg at the center were charged by the little battery protected in the black, elastic shell. The first electric batteries on this world! And these *shleath*, the mighty, indestructible *shleath* howled in malignant terror. They had no true skin, they were vast masses of naked, unprotected protoplasm. Each touch of those charged wires sent a minute electric current charging through their vast masses—torturing, unbearable current.

It was happening there in the courtyard as Penton had known it would. The vast yard was boiling with the protoplasmic Titans, their weird, anguished cries shrilling in the night. Outside the palace a vast echo was rolling back, the elephantine bulks of the restlessly moving *shleath* touched one of the electrically charged webs, the shocking current made it writhe and heave. Frantically they sought escape, escape that was barred by the glass walls, by the special doors.

Shaloor were appearing at the lower gates, ordering them, directing them. Abruptly a mighty, shining bulk rolled down to the pompous midget, and whipped him into extinction with its glistening pseudopod. And the thing howled. A shock-disc touched it. Every move of its sprawled bulk touched one of the scattered shock-discs. From other gratings about the great court P'holkuun's reinforcements were tossing in the webs now; the court was paved with them.

The *shleath* found only one escape. They were dividing now, splitting and dwindling, splitting till their jellied bulks covered more, but smaller areas. Smaller, smaller they became as more and more of the webs fell. They could slip between them now, find some surcease from the unknown horror of electric currents whose tiniest trickle made them writhe in agony.

Penton watched in silence. The fifty- and seventy-five foot Titans had dwindled, screaming. None was larger than a two-foot globe of jelly!

"Put on those boots," said Penton softly, "and come on." From his waist,

he himself unstrapped the network of charged wires, and wrapped them about his legs. From his belt two sets of wires dangled, connecting the leggings to five tiny cells. "Now, P'holkuun, where is the man with the rope? We can go down there now, if we can open this grill. No *shleath* will dare to touch us now. This grill is bolted in two places, and I think the atomic flash has still power enough to burn two."

THE atomic flashlight was changed now; two heavy copper leads had been soldered to its terminals. As they touched the steel bolts, the hissing green flame of the copper arc shrilled into the metal twice. The flash tube, its storage device of twisted atoms intended only for the light task of providing illumination, hummed and grew warm. The bolt sputtered suddenly and fell molten. The lurid green flare ate at another bar.

It glowed red, then white—and parted. Another—and Penton dropped the flash tube with a curse. It glowed for a moment, and died, its last dregs of energy exhausted. Together the Earthmen heaved at the weakened grill. The grating moved a fraction of an inch protestingly, and held. Again and again the two men heaved; finally all the Lanoor who could reach it added their strength.

Then, from a distant grating, a violet beam of death reached out, and crackled the stone twenty feet from them.

Penton ran. "Damn," he groaned. "They've spotted that grating, and they won't let us near it now. We've got to try some other way. I wonder—"

He started down the corridor, turned back to the next grating, and tried it. It was locked solidly.

"Tathuol, can you lead me to a grating where there are some Shaloor posted, at least one of whom has one of our weapons?"

The Lanoor thought a moment. "I can lead you to the one from which they fired just a while ago."

"Good. P'holkuun, if you have a brave man, tell him to stay at that grate we left, and test it every few minutes until we give him the signal to stop. He has to keep out of the way of the beam, but he has to keep the man who is running it interested. Anybody want the job?"

P'holkuun laughed mirthlessly.

"I doubt it. Go ahead, I will take care of it. If my luck is bad, remember your promise to free my people."

"Right, my friend," Penton nodded slowly. "They will be, before the sun rises. But—be spry." Penton took the Lanoor's hand in a firm grasp for a moment, then followed Tathuol. Through the rabbit-warren palace they dodged. Once they met a searching party of a half a dozen Shaloor armed with the little yellow tubes that carried the deadly White Flower—had kept out of sight. But Tathuol knew the mazelike routes of the building far better than did those lords by proxy, for their strange, crossed vision made walking difficult, and they hated it.

"Beyond that turn," the Lanoor said at last, "is the grating we saw the Shaloor fire from. I cannot guarantee that he is still there."

"Let us hope so, then. We—ah, he is." A brief, soft glare of violet shot out from the corridor's end. Noiselessly Penton rounded the corner, Blake close behind him. Four Shaloor stood watching, looking out across the courtyard to a distant gateway where metal bars shone dully red. Cracked, blistered stone told of the violence of the pistol they used.

"He is trying to get us to melt that gate away," said one of the Shaloor uneasily.

"Much good may it do him. I'll get him the next time he shows, because I haven't changed the direction since the last shot. I—"

Penton's powerful arms wrapped two of the bean-stalk giants while Blake caught the others. Instantly six of the Lanoor who had followed them de-

scended and in the space of seconds, the Shaloor glared in anger from their bonds.

PENTON carefully examined the gun he held.

"It's one of ours. Needs a new charge, too; not more than ten second's life left. This one is set for steel, too, and we haven't any. Well—"

With a knife for a screw-driver, and two bits of metal in pinching fingers for a wrench, Penton opened the butt of the weapon, and pulled out the tiny reel that carried the iron-wire fuel. Then he adjusted four tiny screws and tore a strip of the copper wire from his protective leggings. With Blake's aid he stretched it cautiously. It was good copper, and it fined down several gauges before it broke. Then he inserted that into the reel, and clamped the gun together.

"Now, if my memory is good, and I have the right constants for the slow release of the copper's energy, we'll get out in fine style. And if it isn't—we'll go out in fine style," he added grimly.

Penton aimed the gun at the grate, and pulled the trigger. Instantly the beam shot forth, a blazing inferno of light that volatilized the grating almost instantly, appeared through the courtyard below, and sent up bubbling smoke. The squealing anger of the *shleath* changed to a vast shrieking. Penton hurled the weapon to the floor. Slowly a glow built up in it, a glow that spread from the tip of the barrel to the breech, and the smoke of the wiring rose from it.

Blake and Penton were two hundred feet down the corridor when the incredible sharpness of the explosion wave hurled them along for twenty feet, like peas from a pea-shooter. The clatter of falling masonry grumbled behind them, and even the steady wail of the *shleath* quieted momentarily.

Penton picked himself up gingerly. "Not bad," he said judicially, "not perfect, but not bad. It might have been, to put it mildly, somewhat worse. We're lucky the town's still here."

Over tumbled blocks of stone that made a perfect ladder, the two men scrambled down to the courtyard. Undamaged, the *Ion* lay some fifty feet from the end of the slide that had crumbled half one wall of the yard.

It was not a path of roses. The Shaloor were on the job, and only their incredibly confused eyesight made it possible. Consistently, half the beams and bullets tore into the enraged *shleath* behind them, and half spattered before them. None came near them.

Ten feet from the entrance Penton gasped, and fell. His unprotected hand was grabbed instantly by a *shleath*, before Blake could lift him to his feet again. The touch of Blake's boot drove it away as Penton spoke. "They have the range. Get in that ship, you fool—they got my leg with a bullet."

"Uh-huh," said Blake. "You talk funny. Hold on. Even on a light world you are heavy—"

FROM a height of some five hundred feet, Blake looked down. Then he turned on the spotlight, and looked at the courtyard below. He adjusted some controls, and when the spotlight exactly covered that yard, he pulled a small tumbler. The light turned violet, and the heaving, greenish floor turned brown and became quiescent. The light went out. Blake pulled the microphone near him, and spoke softly, words that roared from the loudspeaker in the outer skin of the ship.

"P'holkuun, if you will come up alone in a plane tomorrow at dawn, we'll meet you. I could take that palace apart, but most of the inhabitants seem to be your folk. In the meantime, I have to pull a bullet out of Penton's leg. Tomorrow at dawn, in a plane from the local port."

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Illustration by
DAVID STONE

"You can't resign," raged Dr. Turner, "you're already discharged!"

The Rebels

By GORDON R. DICKSON

Winkely knew more about

pottery than he knew

about people, but he proved

he wasn't cracked. . . .

WELL, gentlemen?" said Dr. Stanhope Turner, in jagged, ice-like tones. "Well, gentlemen, what have you got to say for yourselves?"

Peter Stoddard and Ridgley Barr stared defiantly back at the president of Garibaldi College. William Winkely blushed and dropped his eyes. He was a

timid soul, Winkely.

Indeed, he was the first to admit his own timidity. And, in general, his archaeological colleagues did not hold the fact against him. Not but that there had been one dark moment in the field trip from which the three had just returned; a moment when a gang of desert Arabs had attempted to use the tent in which they had stored a priceless find of early Egyptian pottery for target practice. Stoddard, it was, and Barr, who had rushed from the dinner table and routed the barbarians with only the table knives they held in their hands.

Winkely had hesitated.

It was a hesitation which no true archaeologist could ever condone. True, Winkely did not have a table knife in his hand at the moment, like his companions. Only a fork. But that should have made no difference. Definitely, beyond the shadow of a doubt, his spirit had been tried and found lacking.

But there was an additional reason for Winkely's present agony. It was he who had got the three into their present predicament. Stoddard and Barr were covering up for him at the immediate moment. He knew it and appreciated it; but did not have the nerve to face Dr. Turner alone.

For it was Winkely who, with the best intentions in the world, had cultivated the acquaintance of a local mystic living near their excavation. The mystic (he was an apostatic Yeziri) had taught Winkely simple telekinesis, which, roughly speaking, is the ability to move material objects by power of mind alone, in order that the archaeologists could do a more thorough job of excavation. And Winkely had, in turn, passed the skill on to Stoddard and Barr. Shortly, the three could leave the shovels and whisk brooms to work by themselves and devote their time exclusively to the fascinating business of classifying their finds.

AGAIN, it was Winkely, who, when the three returned to the States, let fall the information about their telekinetic methods of excavation. He had even demonstrated it to a reporter by lifting the nearest taxicab six feet into the air by mental power alone. Winkely had conceived the demonstration as an interesting parlor trick. It turned out to be the material for nation-wide publicity.

Bad publicity, in the eyes of Dr. Stanhope Turner.

"What are we here, at Garibaldi College?" he had asked, with some reason. "Sideshow barkers?" And summoned the three immediately to his office.

"Well, Gentlemen?" he inquired, when they were assembled. "Well, gentlemen, what have you got to say for yourselves?"

"Dr. Turner," replied Stoddard with some asperity, "Your question seems to imply that we need to defend some reprehensible action. I consider it unjust."

"And so do I," added Barr, stoutly.

Winkely shuddered. Stoddard and Barr were young men. As for Winkely, his forehead had made two large, v-shaped sallies into his hairline and, barring a new medical miracle (probably not to be hoped for in the near future) would hold the territory gained. He, alone, would never have replied so brashly.

Dr. Turner's respectable stomach swelled with wrath. Challenged, to his face, and by mere instructors who were not even related to outstanding alumni!

"If you please," he snorted. "I will be the judge of the justness of your actions where this college is concerned. Garibaldi has been held up to public ridicule by your charlatanism, your display of kitchen magic."

Stoddard's black hair flopped rebelliously forward over his eyes. Barr's jaw crept pugnaciously out. Into both their attitudes was creeping the same wild battle-light which had sent the desert Arabs flying from their table knives. But Dr. Turner was no armed nomad. He was opening his mouth to utter further thunders when Winkely meekly interrupted.

"But it really works," said Winkely,

appeasingly.

"*Mr.* Winkely," snapped Dr. Turner, turning on the little man with fine sarcasm. "What on earth has that got to do with it?"

"I only thought—" began Winkely. But Dr. Turner steamrollered over him.

"It is not *accepted!*" he roared, pounding his desk with one large fist. "Telekinesis may be as pure a science as—as—physics, for all I know—or care. But as long as I'm President, it will not be treated with other than contempt, here at Garibaldi. Possibly, when ninety per cent of the other outstanding institutions in this country have accepted it, we may consider recognizing the subject here. But even then, even then, gentlemen, I promise you it's chance will be a slim one."

There was a momentary space of deathly stillness in the office following this awful statement. Dr. Turner allowed the anger to fade slowly from his massive face.

"What do you want us to do about it?" demanded Stoddard with youthful rashness.

Dr. Turner's white brows drew together into a forest of inexpressible grandeur.

"Gentlemen," he said solemnly, looking in each of their faces in turn. "You must issue a public retraction to the papers."

"What!" cried Barr.

"Retract!" thundered Dr. Turner, drawing himself up to his full height.

"Never!" replied Stoddard and Barr with one voice.

Winkely gave an ambiguous squeak which could be taken whichever way a listener might feel inclined to take it.

"What!" said Dr. Turner in his turn. "Consider what this means, gentlemen. You will be cast out of your positions here at Garibaldi. You will be unable to get another post at any other respectable institution. Think it over."

"Never," repeated Barr. "I don't know about men from other departments—" Dr. Turner, who was originally from History, started angrily—"but an archaeologist never retracts."

"Then," roared Dr. Turner, "Garibaldi will disown you."

"Oh, will it?" said Stoddard, nastily. "Then I resign."

"And I resign," said Barr.

Winkely gave another ambiguous squeak.

"You can't resign!" said Dr. Turner in a towering rage. "You're already discharged, all three of you!"

SADLY, the three archaeologists stood on the steps of the College Administration Building, watching the sun go down. Already they seemed to be intruders in the place where they had studied and worked for years. Behind them the academic world was locked and barred, forever shut to them, who up to this time, had been like fragile, scholarly children, kindly sheltered by its stout walls from the crude world outside.

"What are your plans, Barr?" Stoddard asked his friend.

"I don't know," said Barr. "I don't know at all."

"How about you, Wink?" Stoddard asked. Winkely sighed wistfully.

"I am not completely without friends," he said in a sad voice. "One of my former pupils has gotten me a position as night janitor in the Grisley Office Building downtown—for old time's sake."

"Well, as for me," said Stoddard, in a strong voice, fire lighting up his rugged face, "I'm through with all this, forever." He indicated the campus with a wide sweep of his arm.

"Society has cast me out!" he cried in a ringing voice. "Let Society beware! I am not made to vegetate in some crass job. I will take to the road and become a bindlestiff."

"And I, too!" echoed Barr, with sudden enthusiasm. "I turn my face against them."

"Right!" said Stoddard. "Two human wolves, outlaws of their kind. Put 'er there, pardner."

They shook hands with grim purpose.

"Come with us, Winkely," Barr begged. But Winkely shook his head.

"It isn't for me," he said, resignedly. "I'm not as young as you two. I don't have the spirit for open defiance and my physical weaknesses would probably hold you back. Thanks anyway."

"Trust us," said Stoddard, taking the older man's hand in his own. "We won't forget you, Wink."

Touched, Winkely shook hands with each of them in turn.

"Good-by," he said. "If you ever need me, you know where to reach me. Grisley Office Building, between six P.M. and six A.M. Daytimes, you will probably find me feeding pigeons in the park."

"Good-by," echoed Stoddard, and Barr. And, with a last handshake, they turned away from him and set out together across the campus, into the rays of the setting sun. Winkely watched the two dark figures, like shadows in a dream, dwindle in the distance. A tear ran down his tanned cheek. From now on he would be completely alone in the world.

Winkely could never afterwards remember with precision just how he slipped into his new job, like a hermit crab into a new shell. It was an imperceptible change, but a profound one. Night after night, he grew more at home in the long, dim corridors and the empty offices; and gradually an affection for his inanimate surrounding began to creep over him as the months went by.

HE DID his cleaning by telekinesis; and, as he sat watching the mop scurry along the halls, mopping, and the wastebaskets emptying themselves, it was not surprising that he should come to personify the animated tools of his new trade. Indeed, if anything, they seemed to respond to the affection his lonely little heart gave so freely. There was one dust rag which appeared to love to sit on his knee for hours at a time, while he stroked its grey cloth and told it stories of his field trips.

And it was this storytelling to the dust rag that gave him the idea of finally clearing his name.

Winkely had no hope of changing the minds of his contemporaries. No, innocent of the passions of men as he was, the little archaeologist knew enough to be sure there was no hope of that. But, one night after he fell silent with the dust rag on his knee, the thought occurred to him that he might at least set the story before Posterity, and that Posterity, judging and understanding him, would not then hold him cowardly in refusing to follow the ways of the open road as his companions had done.

At this thought, he fell into an absent, musing state, in which he looked back on the days of that last fatal field trip. How happy he had been then. Even—yes—even in the moment following his disgrace in shirking combat with the Arab vandals, he had been happy. For then life stretched out before him, smooth and uninterrupted; teaching, with luck, a few more field trips, retirement, and then, perhaps, a modest pamphlet or two in which he discussed recent discoveries or argued the relative age of North American pottery invention. And now, all this had been put forever beyond his reach. Future archaeologists would sneer at his name. If only he could prove the innocence of his motives in using telekinesis for excavational purposes.

In this dreamy mood, he scarcely noticed the stray impulse that made him send a piece of paper skittering across a desk in the large insurance office in which he now sat. He watched it idly as it slipped into position in the typewriter, was rolled up by the platen and indented by the tab button.

His lips moved thoughtfully.

"I begin this book," said Winkely, half to himself. The typewriter keys commenced to click busily, "with many misgivings. Above all, I am conscious of my own inability to relate the discovery and use of telekinesis in Archaeology, in that manner best calculated to inform my readers. I feel myself, at this moment, desperately unworthy of putting before the world exactly what took place on

that field trip and afterward, on the return of myself and my two colleagues, Peter Stoddard and Ridgley Barr, to this country."

The dust rag slid unheeded to the floor as Winkely rose to his feet and began to pace the room, up and down the long rows of typewriter laden desks. Occasionally he would stop and peer at his own machine to see how it was doing. It typed with remarkable neatness and a minimum of errors.

"Perhaps some of you who read this may know," Winkely continued, "what our purpose was in making that particular field trip. We were investigating a recent find of glazed pottery in the lower Nile area. . . ."

AS HE talked, the room seemed to fade about him. Imperceptibly, its outlines were replaced by those of his old classroom at Garibaldi. The mops, the buckets, the brooms, the cleaning compound, went on with their work in all parts of the building, lonely, automatically, and all but completely forgotten.

The months slipped by. Now, in the long insurance office, it was not one, but ten typewriters that clicked busily, as Winkely, with a skill born of long practise, dictated mentally at a speed that no one machine could sustain. He paced the room with short, jerky strides, occasionally pausing to glance out the tall office windows at the roofs of the dark buildings around him, on the rooftops which were already beginning to be capped by the white snow that fell steadily and softly upon them, covering their dark, sooty surfaces like white, sugary frosting on a chocolate cake.

"—after proving to me," Winkely was dictating, "that neither he nor I existed, Murad Ali was going on to prove that nothing else existed either, when he perceived that my intelligence was not adapted to taking such a great step in one jump. So he picked up a stick by way of illustration, and, placing it in the air between us, some six inches above the ground—where it stayed—told me to try and move it—"

The door to the insurance office swung suddenly open and two rough-looking figures charged into the room.

"—this I was unable to do—" Winkely continued to dictate automatically. Then comprehension struck him.

"Stoddard!" he cried. "Barr!" And hurled himself joyfully forward upon his two young friends. They surrounded him gleefully, slapping him on the back and shaking his hand so energetically that it was a moot point whether it would be torn off or not.

The hubbub of greeting over, Winkely had time to stand back and take a square look at his friends. Both were looking remarkably healthy, but then they always had, so that was not too telling a detail. The greatest difference was in their voices. Both had acquired deep, carrying tones well adapted to shouting down arguments and threatening people. They moved with a loose swagger that captured Winkely's attention at once. No one could look squarely at them and fail to recognize at once that they were rugged sorts of characters.

"We've been kicked out of twelve towns," Barr informed Winkely, happily.

"Thirteen, wasn't it?" said Stoddard deprecatingly.

"You're right," said Barr. "It was thirteen. I wasn't going to count Las Vegas."

"Oh, Las Vegas," said Stoddard, with a slight sneer. "That's where we broke jail."

"Broke jail!" gasped Winkely.

"Nothing to it," said Barr. "They were trying to hold us for a sanity hearing. 'What nonsense!' I said to Stoddard, and we telekineticised our way out."

"Did you get hurt?" inquired Winkely, round-eyed.

"With only steel, concrete and twenty armed guards to stop us?" said Stoddard. "Of course not. I haven't done a day's work since I left," he added proudly.

"Neither have I," said Barr.

"But how did you eat?" asked Winkely.

"Oh, handouts," said Stoddard, casual-

ly. "We never went more than three or four days without something. And I needn't tell you that shelter was no problem, since camping out in a howling blizzard at forty below zero is child's play for any archaeologist with experience in field trips."

WINKELY was struck speechless. Then a sudden thought galvanized him. "How did you get in here?" he asked. "I must have forgotten to lock the street door." And he started to hurry from the room. Stoddard restrained him with one strong hand.

"Telekinesis, of course," said Stoddard. "We used it to unlock the door and quiet the burglar alarm, too."

"Of course," said Winkely, relieved. "How stupid of me." He struck his brow apologetically as if to punish it for containing insufficient brains.

"And what have you been doing?" asked Stoddard.

"Oh, the same old thing," said Winkely, deprecatingly. "Mopping, dusting, nightwatching. By telekinesis, of course. Nothing interesting like your breaking jail and being kicked out of towns."

"Oh well," Stoddard consoled him. "We can't all lead interesting lives—"

"Hey!" interrupted Barr, suddenly, pulling a sheet of paper out of the nearest typewriter. "What's this?"

Winkely blushed.

"Oh, that," he said.

"Yes, this," said Barr, waving a sheet of paper in the air. "What is it?"

"Oh, *that!*" said Winkely, with the energetic air of someone who has just had some knotty problem explained to him. "Nothing."

"What *kind* of a nothing?" asked Stoddard.

"Well—" Winkely coughed a little, deprecatingly. "It's just something I thought I'd leave to be published after my death. Memoirs, of a sort. About our last field trip."

"It is?" cried Stoddard. He reached hurriedly for the pile of completed manuscript and began to skim through it. Barr joined him.

Winkely watched them, standing nervously first on one foot and then on the other. He hummed a few bars of "Sweet Adeline." He wandered to the window, stared out for a while, and then came back to stand watching them in an agony of embarrassment and suspense.

"It's nothing," he hastily assured them, as they put the last pages down. "Nothing at all. Really."

Stoddard and Barr looked at each other.

"Stoddard," said Barr. "I'm ashamed of myself."

"And so am I," said Stoddard. "Here we've been charging around the country, breaking out of jails, heedlessly enjoying ourselves, while Wink here put his nose to the grindstone and went quietly to work at clearing our reputations." He turned to the older man and held out his hand.

"You're a better man than I am," William Winkely," he said simply and impressively.

Somewhat bemused—but touched, nonetheless—Winkely shook hands solemnly with each of his erstwhile colleagues.

"Oh, it's all right," he said shyly, "I was just filling in my spare time. I don't know what you could have done to help, anyway."

Barr brought his fist down with a crash on a nearby desktop.

"What we could have done—hah!" he cried, his eyes flashing fire.

"What we can still do!" echoed Stoddard enthusiastically. "We're still in time to get the story properly published for you, Wink."

"I thought," said Winkely timorously, "of paying the publication costs out of my life savings as a janitor. Sort of a private printing of a limited edition of a hundred and fifty or two hundred copies."

"Hundred!" snorted Stoddard. "A hundred thousand. And they'll pay you. Just leave all that end of the business to Barr and myself."

"Thanks," said Winkely.

"Think nothing of it," said Stoddard, magnanimously. And Barr nodded to show his agreement.

IT WAS Christmas before the manuscript was finished, spring before it was sold, and fall before it was published. Its sales zoomed almost immediately to unprecedented heights. Stoddard and Barr returned from New York to find Winkely surrounded by huge piles of mail and feverishly opening letters.

"Success!" cried Stoddard in ringing tones, as they closed the door to Winkely's apartment behind them.

"Winkely," said Barr affectionately to the little archaeologist, "you're famous."

Winkely rolled tortured eyes up from his correspondence.

"What am I going to do?" he inquired frantically. "They all want something or other from me. Listen—" he reached into the pile in front of him and picked out a letter at random.

Acme Wrecking Co.
Tuglo, Penn.

Dear Mr. Winkely:

I have read your book with a great deal of pleasure; and it occurs to me that an arrangement might be worked out between yourself and my firm which would be of great advantage to both of us.

Would you care to drop down to Tuglo at my expense and talk the matter over further?

Very truly yours,
Gus Hammerstall, Pres.

"Well—that one isn't so bad," said Winkely. "They only want to offer me a job or something. Where's one of the other kind? Oh yes—"

Dear Mr. Wankly:

Three yrs. ago Granpa come in from the farm for a short visit and moved in the front bedroom. It has been three years now and he is out getting drunk on corn likker and chasing the girls every night the old rip. Like I say, it has been three yrs. and I can't look the nehbors in the face. I would take it kindly if you telephoned him back to the farm.

Much obliged,
Doris Mae Leona Wilters (Mrs.)

"Not that I could do anything about that one even if I wanted to," said Winkely. "There's no return address. Still—"

Barr had been pawing through the stack of unopened mail. Suddenly he interrupted, holding up an envelope.

"Here's one from Garibaldi!" he exclaimed.

Winkely's face lit up. Eagerly he snatched the letter from Barr. There was a suspicious tremble to his fingers as he tore it open. But as he read the brief message inside his face fell.

"What is it, Wink?" demanded Stoddard.

"I thought it might be from Turner," he said. "But it's only from one of the College Trustees." He sighed deeply and read it to them.

Dear Dr. Winkely:

I and several other of the Trustees at Garibaldi College were very sorry to see you and Mr. Stoddard and Mr. Barr leave when you did. As a matter of fact, we protested the matter to Dr. Turner, but were overruled.

It has occurred to us that the gratifying success of your recent book gives good grounds for reopening the matter of your reinstatement. There is a regular Trustee's meeting next Thursday, at which Dr. Turner will be present, and we intend to confront him with the question at that time. Assuming that you, Mr. Stoddard and Mr. Barr, are still interested in reappointment, would you do us the favor of appearing at that meeting to say a few words on your own behalf?

Sincerely yours,
Thomas Melham
Secy. Board of Trustees
Garibaldi College.

"Humph!" said Stoddard. "That won't do any good. The Trustees at Garibaldi are just a rubber stamp for the President. Everyone knows that."

"That's right," said Barr. He looked sympathetically at the older man. "Might as well forget about it, Wink."

But Winkely's lips were unexpectedly set in a thin line and there was a gritty look of determination in his eye.

"After all," he said, suddenly. "What have we got to lose?"

Stoddard and Barr stared at him in surprise.

"Why, Wink," said Stoddard. "What's gotten into you?"

"The alternative," said Winkely. He cast a look at the pile of mail and shuddered. "The Acme Wrecking Company and Mrs. Wilters. It just came home to me." He looked at his two friends. "How would you like to spend the rest of your life tearing down houses and moving grandparents?"

"But you don't have to—" began Barr.

"Never mind," said Winkely, with a firmness entirely foreign to his usual gentle nature. "This is at least a chance and we're going to take it."

THE following Thursday was a bright autumn day. Much to Winkely's surprise, as they rode to the Administration Building by taxi; he noted a large number of students and other people milling around the campus. He pointed them out to Stoddard and Barr. His two young friends looked serious.

"The students are in an ugly frame of mind," said Barr.

"That's right," agreed Stoddard, solemnly, "by and large the students are for you. You have become something of a popular hero. I'm afraid that if Turner doesn't reinstate *you*, at least, blood will be spilt."

"Over me?" said Winkely, astonished.

"I'm afraid so," said Stoddard. He hesitated, and then went on. "Didn't you ever notice the large number of students in your *Introduction to Geology* course?"

"Why, yes," said Winkely, "now that you mention it—"

"And tell me, Wink," said Barr. "When was the last time you flunked a student?"

"Well—er—" said Winkely, embarrassed. "I—er—well now—"

"I'll tell you," said Barr. "Everyone on campus knows, since it was a historic occasion. It was five years ago, and the man was that bank robber who was masquerading as a student to hide from the FBI."

"But—" stammered Winkely.

"No buts about it, Wink," Stoddard said, firmly. "For years now, the majority of students at Garibaldi have been taking Geology from you to satisfy their requirements in science for graduation. You have become an institution and those students out there are desperate. Seventy-three point five per cent of them are facing a dismal future in which they remain undergraduates forever. If Turner should refuse to reinstate you now, they may well tear him limb from limb. In which case the three of us will be guilty of murder."

Winkely gasped.

"Can't we talk them out of it?" he cried. Barr looked thoughtful.

"The students—possibly, yes," he said. "But you noticed the other, older people on campus, too?"

"Yes," quavered Winkely, his heart palpitating.

"Those are parents," said Barr. "If the students remain undergraduates, the parent will have to support them for the rest of their lives. I doubt if we could talk them out of anything."

Winkely shuddered.

"If only Dr. Turner weren't so stubborn," he said, unhappily.

Thomas Melham, the slight, dark-haired trustee who had written Winkely the letter, met them in the outer office of the board room, where Trustee meetings were held. He was mopping his brow.

"Word has gotten out," he said as Winkely, Stoddard and Barr came up.

"We know," answered Stoddard in low tones. "The students and their parents outside know all about this meeting."

"So does Dr. Turner," said Melham. He motioned them to the closed door that separated the office from the board room.

"Charlatans — hogwash — coercion — never give in—" muffled by the heavy door, but understandable enough, a few words in Turner's angry basso came filtering through to them. Melham shook his head sadly.

"I'm afraid it's no use," he said. "The student-parent threat has merely got his

back up. Listen to him a minute!"

From the Board Room a sudden bellow of rage took cognizance of a thousand-voiced chant which had begun under the administration windows.

"We want Winkely!" roared the voices outside. "WE WANT WINKELY!"

The three friends looked at each other. Winkely took a deep breath.

"Come on!" he said—and before any of the others could stop him, he had pulled open the door and gone striding into the Board Room.

His appearance struck Turner momentarily dumb. Winkely profited by the moment's respite to walk the length of the Board Room.

"Well Viper?" inquired Turner furiously from the far end of the room. "Don't think you can intimidate me!"

Winkely faced the enraged College President. His face was pale, but his voice was firm.

"I have a few words to say," he said. "Will you listen!"

"Never!" roared Turner. A babel of pleas and protests rose immediately from the board members.

"Very well!" shouted Turner, flinging himself down in his chair at the head of the table and folding his arms implacably. "For five minutes!"

Winkely opened his mouth to speak, but at that moment a new sound began to well up from the crowd of students outside. For a moment, none of them in the room could identify it. But then the words came sharp and clear, even through the third story window. The crowd was singing; and the song was *"We'll Hang Dr. Turner From a Sour Apple Tree."*

His face purpling, Dr. Turner leaped back to his feet. "No!" he roared. "After that I won't—"

"Turner!" The sudden command in Winkely's voice rang through the Board Room. Dr. Turner froze, his arm upraised. Slowly, he lowered it and sank stiffly back into his seat.

"Dr. Turner!" said Winkely huskily. "You made a promise and I expect you to keep it. With your permission, I will go on with what I was going to say."

Turner's face flushed and his lips trembled slightly. But he said nothing.

"er—" Winkely looked around desperately.

"The quality of mercy is not strained," he babbled. "It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven—"

THE Trustees looked at Winkely in surprise. Then they looked at each other. Finally they looked at Turner, but the College President only nodded as if encouraging Winkely to go on.

"It is twice blessed—" continued Winkely, and, with a few errors and transposed lines he struggled through the rest of the famous quotation from Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* in which Portia attempts to soften Shylock's bitter heart.

To the surprise of everyone present, Dr. Turner made no move to interrupt.

"Everyone has the right of free speech," Winkely went on somewhat wildly. The perspiration was standing out on his forehead. "Why not the right of free telekinesis?"

Dr. Turner nodded.

"Ah, you agree," cried Winkely. "I knew you would. Consider that we—er—stand at the threshold of a new science. Will you be the one to hold it back?"

Dr. Turner shook his head.

"Listen!" said Winkely, with sudden inspiration. "I heard the voice of the future outside that window—" he paused to let the yells of the students outside come floating into them—"do you recognize it for what it is?"

Dr. Turner nodded.

"Then may I ask once more," said Winkely, "that you reconsider the case of Stoddard, Barr and myself. Do what your heart impels you, but let me ask once more that you reinstate us."

A LONG moment of awful stillness, followed. A terrific struggle seemed to be going on within Dr. Turner. His face

became even more ruddy than usual and his large body shook with inner emotion. Finally, slowly, he nodded his head.

The Trustees burst into cheers. They leaped up from their chairs. Reappointment papers for Winkely, Stoddard and Barr were pushed in front of him, and, slowly, ponderously, he signed them. Melham, the Secretary to the Board, rushed up to Winkely.

"Marvelous — uh — speech," he said, shaking the little archaeologist. "Tell me, how—"

He was interrupted by the heavy form of Dr. Turner, pushing his way through the crowd. Having signed the papers, he had risen, and was now headed out of the room. He nodded absently to those board members who attempted to speak to him, brushed past them and went out the door.

"Excuse me—" said Winkely, tearing himself away from Melham and diving after the College President. Stoddard and Barr followed him. Melham stared after them for a second, then turned away and hurried to the open window, where he leaned out, waving papers and telling the students below all about the happy conclusion of the meeting.

The students cheered. The parents cheered louder. Happiness reigned supreme on the campus.

"Viper!" snarled the President of Garibaldi College, between his teeth.

"But Dr. Turner!" pleaded Winkely, "I did it for your own good."

The four of them—Dr. Turner, Winkely, Stoddard and Barr, were standing in a little park some three blocks away from the campus. Distant cheers still drifted to their ears.

"For my good!" echoed Turner. "*Ha!*" And he laughed a cold, sarcastic laugh.

"For your good," maintained Winkely stoutly. "The students and their parents were up in arms. I was given to understand that if you refused to reinstate us you would never leave the campus in one piece. I took the only course I could perceive. Using telekinesis, I held your body and vocal chords in a paralyzing grip and made you nod your head at the appropriate moments."

Turner snorted.

"I know what you're thinking," Winkely went on, gathering strength as he spoke. "You think I wasn't interested in you— I just saw a way to get our jobs back. Just to disabuse you of that notion," said Winkely determinedly, "I resign."

Stoddard and Barr opened their mouths to resign also, but Turner was before them.

"Oh no, you don't!" he snapped. "Try to get out of that appointment and I'll sue you for everything you ever hope to own. You—" he said, shaking a heavy forefinger under Winkely's nose—"have made a fool out of me for the last time. Making me sit there and nod my head like a—like a—nincompoop! No indeed, you will not resign! You will remain on the staff of Garibaldi as an employee; and as an employee you will take orders —from me." Dr. Turner laughed with a harsh note of triumph. "I know you, Winkely. After a few days back in your old position you will obey my slightest whim rather than risk losing it again. And why?" he thrust his face close to Winkely. "Because you are a scholar, and to scholars their work means more than anything else in the world. No," finished Turner, throwing back his shoulders and surveying him with unconcealed glee, "your day is over, Winkely. I shall never be made a fool of again!"

And with that, the President of Garibaldi College, turned on his heel and strode off. So flushed was he with his victory that he failed entirely to notice that only the toes of his black, well-polished shoes were contacting the pavement. His heels trod thin air; and the general impression he unconsciously gave as he disappeared down the block in the direction of the campus, was that of a fat and elderly ballet dancer prancing like a balloon into the distance.

"Stoddard," said Winkely, in a tone of mild reproach, "You shouldn't have—really!"

Illustration by PETER POULTON

MOUSEHOLE

By STUART HARBOUR

The old man was playing his cat and mouse game from the grave

THE town of Ferndale, being a vacation town used to the oddities and eccentricities of fishermen, surfboard riders and boating enthusiasts, paid little attention when old Par Lurden bought his power saw at the town's only hardware store. The fact that he paid for the saw with a crisp hundred dollar bill, entirely out of keeping with his unkempt appearance caused no comment. The fact that he carried in his arms a large, black tomcat, that he talked either to the cat, or to himself, or to an unseen and unseeable companion brought only the briefest of lifted eyebrows. He interrupted his monologue to confide to the uninterested salesman that he had just bought the "old Bleyruth place," that he was going to add a wing to it, and that he was (in a tone of intense and secret pride) something of a scientist.

Par Lurden was working, he said, on a way to get into the fifth dimension

which was entirely a matter of size. He went out of the store, having ararnged for the purchase to be delivered, mumbling again that it was only a matter of size. The salesman turned and winked at his immediate superior and dismissed that matter from mind. It is questionable whether he recalled the incident even when he read, six months later, that an aged gentleman had been found by the postman in the lane of the "old Bleyruth place" quite dead and with one arm considerably missing. The coroner and the sheriff, investigating hurriedly because it was an election month, determined that in building the annex onto the house, the old man had cut off most of his arm in the power saw. That he had (with what remarkable fortitude and for what reason they did not mention) bound the stump and allowed it to heal untended. He had suffered a heart attack on his way to the mailbox. They could not find the missing arm and it was blandly assumed that old Par had buried it.

Little more than a month later, the heirs of the old man arrived in Ferndale and began asking questions. That is, Mr. Lurden asked questions. His wife followed with hesitant steps, incurring wrath at every motion. The townspeople, seeing the purpling bruises on her face and arms, gossiped, quite correctly, that her husband beat her. Doctor Barton, who was by nature mild, returned from his one visit to the Lurdens somewhat riled. He had been summoned by Mr. Lurden who was sure he was dying of pneumonia and did not care that it was three in the morning. The doctor remarked to his wife that he wished Mr. Lurden had been sufficiently ill to warrant something nauseous in the way of medicines. He repeated also what Mrs. Lurden had told him as he wrote out the innocuous prescription. Wistfully — it was nice to have a house, she had never had a house. Plaintively—it was too bad that Uncle Par had built all the junk on the house. Shyly—that "Poor David" was quite upset that he couldn't find Uncle Par's money. Doctor Barton agreed that the annex did look like a chicken house in imminent danger of collapse and mentioned tactfully that perhaps Mr. Lurden the elder had not had any money. The couple stayed in the house with the old man's cat, and any interest in them died of starvation.

Some three months later little Mrs. Lurden, looking pinched and grey, came to the Doctor's house carrying the big tomcat and explained haltingly, with an air of furtive gayety which the Doctor found easy to understand, that her husband was gone. No traces of him could be found, and it was assumed that he had left her. True, so far as it went, the theory was not **quite** the case. . . .

"DAVID," she said pleadingly. "The house mews."

He put down his paper. "Yesterday it creaked."

"It mews," she repeated plaintively. "You said the wind made it creak, but I can't imagine what would make it mew."

He was abruptly disgusted. "I can't imagine, Mary, but you certainly can. If there were anything you could not imagine I would have known it long ago." He returned to the paper with a shrug of dismissal.

She laughed, a small gurgle of unamused appreciation. "Poor David. I know it's hard for you to be married to such a goose." She hurried on, "There wasn't any wind though, David, and I heard it quite distinctly." Still getting no answer she concluded, "Right out there in the annex—sort of—mewing." Looking up, she found his eyes fixed upon her with aloof amusement. She recognized the expression. It was the one he practised in the morning when he was shaving.

"What," he said, biting off the word like a segment of crisp and tasty food, "were you doing in the annex?"

"Poor David," she gurgled again. "I know you told me to stay out of there, but there was such an awful smell, really

quite an awful smell."

"Smell?" His lips sniffed and savored of the word, "Smell?"

She giggled tremulously. "Yes, isn't that funny? Such a bad, nasty—"

"Stink?" he offered politely.

"Well—yes." As he turned incredulously back to the paper, she rushed on, "I opened the door into it and the kitchen windows and aired it out and after a while it went away. While it was open, though, I heard it mewing, clear back inside where the door is."

"Mary." He was wearing his fatherly expression now. "Do you recall which side of the house the outside door opens on? Hmm?"

She licked her lips nervously. "Well, the door is out of the kitchen, that's the west, then there's a turn that goes off back to the north, sort of, more northeast maybe, then there's another turn that—"

"The outside, Mary, the outside. Where does it open on the outside?"

"But it doesn't," she protested. "It's locked. It doesn't open at all."

He set his jaw at her, spoke with a mild, menacing patience. "Where would it open, Mary dear, if it did open. From the outside, where would it open?"

She lowered her head like a shamed child. "The outside door is on the east, David. Over the beach."

"That's right." He applauded sidently. Then what do you suppose it was you heard?"

"I suppose you supose it was the ocean," she parroted. Then she murmured, as if to herself, "But it wasn't. The hall doesn't even go to the east side from the inside."

"I see," he said quietly. "It opens on the east from the outside, but from the inside it opens somewhere else." He squelched her with a glare and turned away with an air of finality. There was no sound in the room but the crackle of the fire and her knitting needles stammering against the silence. She spoke again.

"I found something today, David. You know how the roof has been leaking in the closet in your room. Well, I was cleaning out in there, up on the top shelves. There were a lot of old clothes and a little tin box." She paused, saw that she had his attention. "I burned the clothes. Really, they were awful, all full of moth holes and musty and smelly."

"What did you do with the box?"

She bent, rummaged in her sewing basket, and brought out a little flat box. He snatched it from her hand. "How you can be so stupid," he muttered. "Rattling on for hours about noises and smells and waiting half the evening to mention something like this to me." He tried to open the box, struggling with it silently for a moment.

"I tried to open it," she said. "It's locked, though. Shall I get the hatchet. We could break the hinges."

HE STRAIGHTENED. "You shall *not!* I'll take it to town with me tomorrow and get it unlocked. I knew damn well that old miser had some money hidden out here, and if this is it I don't want it shredded with a hatchet."

She murmured, placatingly, "I didn't know Uncle Par had any money."

"Well it's certain he had something out here he was being pretty damn secretive about. Crazy old coot." He strode about the room, waving the box and declaiming harshly, "Not answering my letters, spending time and good money building that junky annex onto the house, trying to disinherit me. Well, we broke that will in a hurry."

"David, you didn't write to him until just before he died, you know. You didn't even know that he'd lost an arm. It's not like you'd been very close."

"Close!" he sneered. "Who'd want to be close to a crazy, conceited old miser like that! I can remember when I was a kid, some of his nutty theories. Oh, he was going to be a great scientist, a theoretical mathematician. He had ideas —" He paused to peer musingly at the little box. "I'll take it in and get it un-

locked tomorrow."

"David, please could I go, too. I'd love to go, really. I haven't been in for over a month. I could do some shopping."

"I think not. We really don't have the money just now."

"Oh. I thought perhaps, since we weren't paying any rent any longer—"

"I doubt that. I doubt that you thought at all." He turned and went into the hall and to his bedroom, carrying the box with him. She watched his retreating back, the needles quiet in her lap. Finally she laid the knitting down and went through the house turning out the lights.

In the kitchen she put down a bowl of milk for the cat, calling coaxingly, "Here kitty, kitty." The cat ignored her pointedly, his eyes fixed on the mousehole beside the annex door. Mary opened the door a crack. The inside of it was covered with clumsily nailed sheets of metal, and beyond a hodge-podge of boards and boxes enclosed a pitch black corridor. She listened intently. "I wonder" she asked the cat, "what Uncle Par built that for. Kitty? Nice kitty," she said hopefully. The cat twitched the end of his tail angrily, and Mary turned out the light and crept down the hall to the safety of her bed.

When David came home the next night she knew that he was angry. The door banged harder than usual and his jaw was set. He threw the little box on the table, watching the contents spill onto the floor. She walked toward it, not daring to ignore the wordless challenge. There was a stained notebook and a long metal key. That was all.

"Poor David," she faltered. "Poor David, there wasn't any money."

"Poor David," he mimicked viciously. "I should have known the old fool was off his rocker."

SHE picked up the little book. It had been soaked through in spots, making the shaky writing all but intelligible. The pages were blotted and runny, the words flowing weirdly. "The box must have leaked," she said. "It was right under where the leak in the roof is."

"Remarkable." He took the book from her. "How did you arrive at that conclusion."

"He must have written it after he lost his arm; the writing's all funny."

"That isn't all that's funny," he grumbled. "Listen to this stupidity—'The foregoing is a spacial formula which blank blank blank a coexistential level or blank blank dimension.'" He leafed to another page. "Or this, 'did not take blank precautions and therefore blank blank mangled my right arm'—must have cut it off in a power saw, the old fool—the whole thing's about building that firetrap out there." He ignored her outstretched hand and threw the book into the fireplace where the flames quickly turned it to ashes.

"What's the key to, David?"

He took the key into his hand. "It's the key to the outside door in the annex." He looked at it musingly, plopping the haft of the key into his open palm. "And I'll bet that **that's** where the money is. Somewhere in that junk yard out there, probably around that door. It's a funny door."

"Yes," she agreed. "Very funny."

"Plenty big enough to have a hollow in it or something. There's no sense in having a door that opens right out above the ocean that way anyhow. Just another one of his weird notions. Come on—" he was suddenly decisive—"I'm going out there and look."

"David—David," she pleaded, "it's all dark out there."

"Well, get a candle," he hissed at her. "Stupid."

She lit the candle with trembling fingers as he stood impatiently by the metal-lined door. "If I find anything, or if I don't," he said, "I'm going to burn this down. The door is fireproof, and this wall is stone and the roof is all tile. It wouldn't even singe the house—I'm going to burn it down." He gestured to the obsidian corridor, "Look at that. Cracker box."

The hall led out from the kitchen, the floor sloping increasingly both upward and to the side. When they reached the first turn, the walls were no longer vertical, and Mary staggered around the turn which seemed to lead back the way they had come.

"Do you want to cremate us?" he demanded irritably. "These walls are like tinder." The walls were colored violently, slanting in every direction but simply up and down. She stumbled dizzily, almost falling. "Here," he cursed. "Give me that." He took the candle and she followed. They came to the second turning which seemed to go in no direction at all; the walls changed color sickeningly, but the floor settled again to the horizontal. Before them was a double door which would open inward at the center. Beside the door was a little niche, and he pushed her roughly into it, commanding "Now see if you can hold that light steady while I try this key."

They had come less than seventy feet, but Mary felt she had walked a mile. She was panting and the candle trembled uncontrollably. "David. I wish you wouldn't open it. Please, David, I wish you wouldn't."

"What's the matter now? Are you hearing things again?"

She put her ear gingerly against the door. There was nothing, no sound, silence. "No," she whispered. "I just don't think it's a very good idea."

"You just don't think," he amended, tauntingly. He thrust her arm against the wall to steady the light and then forced the long key into the rusty lock, twisting it this way and that. "I'll bet he put every cent—" abruptly the door was open and David stepped forward. From the niche she could see nothing but the ochre light that fell through the opened door, then there was a gurgling scream and David fell to the floor at her feet. Where his legs should have been was a welling crimson stain. His hands scrabbled weakly on the splintered floor; his mouth formed wordless horrors. Staring, she saw a great claw come through the opening, a curved claw as long as her arm which punctured the writhing thing with a single neat movement and was gone with it. There was a sound of liquid slavering, a monstrous purring, a waiting quiet. She shut her mouth on the rising scream and her loose fingers let the candle flame sag against the bare wood of the wall. The flame caught almost immediately, and she moved away slowly as the door filled with fire turning at last to run headlong down the tipsy corridors and plunge frantically into the kitchen.

Her ears rang with a distant caterwauling, and she realized at last that the sound came from the cat. The cat licked his bloody paws while he stared reproachfully at the smoke which oozed from the mousehole. She stared in disbelief at the mousehole, the incredible doorway from which she had just fled, licking away the tears that ran into her mouth from her smoke smarting eyes.

"I knew it, I knew it," she said. "It doesn't open on the outside, it doesn't. You ought to be ashamed," she said. "You shouldn't have done it." She stamped her foot. "You just shouldn't have done it."

They stared at one another for a moment. Suddenly she giggled and ran to the refrigerator, wrenched open the door and snatched out the bottle of cream, emptying it into the bowl before the purring cat. "Nice Kitty", she said.

FEATURED NEXT ISSUE

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THE LAWS OF CHANCE

A Brilliant Complete Novel

By MURRAY LEINSTER

Illustration by
EMSH

SPLIT PERSONALITY

By WILLIAM MORRISON

There were no two ways about it—something was on Chut-chut's mind—both of them. . . .

THE fat man in the tight clothes—the one who was supposed to be cured—winked at her as he went out, and Mala frowned. That was the beauty of this kind of work, she thought bitterly, you met such a fine class of disgusting people. You encountered the most wonderful assortment of neurotics that this out-of-the-way planet had ever had the bad luck to assemble in one place. You smiled at them, and took down their life histories, and tried to pretend that you

liked doing it because you were helping your fellow human beings. And you wondered what it would be like to associate with someone normal for a change.

You did associate with the doctors, but you couldn't call them exactly normal either. It was just that their symptoms differed from those of their patients. For instance, you took it for granted that the vision programs weren't exactly the thing to soothe the bill-paying clientele, so you didn't turn them on. But it was going too far when Dr. Terna Clane, in her shrewish way, refused to let you play soft music on the radio, for fear it might be therapeutically unsuitable. And it was carrying it to the point of downright insanity when her corpulent colleague, Dr. Cordier, extended the prohibition to listening with earphones, on the ground that even this might excite the patients. Especially when the programs were so soothing to *you*.

Mala slid the fat man's card back into the *closed* file, and stood up at her desk. At that moment, the door opened, and her lower jaw dropped with amazement. What do you know? she said to herself. He looks like an ordinary non-neurotic human being. What have I done to deserve this?

He was ordinary, but intelligent. And worried. He was neither tall nor short, more ugly than handsome, but ugly in a handsome way. He said hesitantly, "My name is Durr, Frank Durr. I have an appointment with either Dr. Clane or Dr. Cordier, I don't know which."

"For yourself?" she asked incredulously.

"No, for a friend. Is it all right to bring him up?"

"Of course. Office A, Dr. Cordier."

He slipped out. Bring *him* up, he had said. So it wasn't his wife. Maybe he wasn't married, she thought happily.

There was a sudden outburst of noise in the corridor, and then a heavy weight banged on the door. Some one panted, "It's all right, Chut, it's all right." And then the door swung open, and Mala saw the friend.

She didn't faint, she could say that much for herself. But she had to admit that it was a shock all the same. She was accustomed to the weird creatures that were sometimes encountered on new planets, and she had learned to take most of them in her stride. But Frank Durr's friend was something else again.

To begin with, he, or it, was in what you might call a straitjacket. There were two legs and six arms, and all of them were encased in white canvasoid, from which they were struggling to escape, in order to throttle Durr and the other man helping him. The thing rippled and shuddered and twisted like a liquid earthquake. And above it all, the two green heads looked on, one in anger, directing the creature's attempt to get free, the other in apathy, as if regretting that it couldn't go to sleep.

SUDDENLY the struggles subsided, and the creature slumped to the floor. The two men lifted it up and dragged it into the Office A. Fascinated, Mala trailed after them.

She could see that Dr. Cordier was ruffled. His fat chins trembled with anger, his belly quivered. He demanded, "What's this, what's this? I don't treat monsters."

The door closed as the other man departed. "Chut-chut isn't a monster," said Durr, drying the perspiration on his face. "He's a bihumanoid."

"I can't treat him," Dr. Cordier announced firmly.

"You'll have to." Durr fished a paper from his pocket. "Here's a government order."

"I don't know *how* to treat him," shouted Dr. Cordier. "Take him out of here and get him to a specialist of his own kind."

"We don't have any." Durr slumped into a chair, the doctor's own chair, and let his gaze wander around the room. His eyes caught Mala's in passing, and he flushed. Why, he's shy, she thought

amusedly. "Perhaps we'd better hear the story, Dr. Cordier," she said very professionally. She had her recorder out, and nodded. "Go on, Mr. Durr."

"Thanks. First, let me give you some of the background, so you'll understand why the government's so anxious to have Chut-chut cured. He was brought here two years ago, from a star in the Andromeda Galaxy to do a special job that no one else can do. The details are still secret, but I can tell you it's an important matter-energy conversion project. Anyway, up till yesterday he did his job well. He had complained occasionally of headaches, but we shrugged the complaints off. We thought the trouble might be due to some trivial factor such as change of gravity. But yesterday, he couldn't work. He had horrible visions in one of his heads."

"In *one* of them?" repeated Dr. Cordier wonderingly.

"In one. But that wasn't all. The really troublesome thing was cerebral inco-ordination, of so violent a nature that he couldn't carry out any of his accustomed duties."

"I beg your pardon?" Dr. Cordier inquired politely.

"Let me explain how his heads function. Notice that they're flat on the inner sides, rounded on the outside. They seem to have evolved from an original head much like our own, one which in the course of time split sharply into right and left sections, and eventually developed individual skull casings.

"Their action, under normal conditions, is perfectly co-ordinated. But in some respects they behave like two separate individuals. It is this characteristic, in fact, which has made Chut-chut and his kind so useful for many special purposes. I've worked with him during the time he's been here, and some of the things he can do are amazing. He can co-ordinate half a dozen different activities, more like an electronic self-actor than a flesh-and-blood creature."

"You know him quite well?" asked Mala.

"As well as anyone here knows him. That's one reason I've been sent along with him. The other reason is, that I can't go ahead with my work unless he does his. He's absolutely necessary for the functioning of an important new research plant. We can't afford to have it held up."

"Replace him," advised Dr. Cordier.

"No humanoid or machine could. We have no choice, but to try to cure him."

Dr. Cordier said desperately, "But except for what you've just told me, I don't know a thing about how his brain works! Human psychology just doesn't apply. And as for his physiology—"

"Don't worry about that, Doctor. Fortunately, our factory physiologist owns a reference book that has a good description of Chut-chut's species, and he gave him the various tests that it listed. Chut-chut passed them all, and the man concluded that he's physically sound. His trouble seems to be psychological."

"But to judge from his violent behavior, he is not the kind of patient I treat. He is either seriously neurotic, or psychotic. "

"He isn't usually violent. He just resented being brought here."

"Suppose he resents talking?"

"He won't," said Durr confidently. "He likes to talk, and once he gets started, you won't have any trouble that way. Both heads speak English quite well."

"How can I analyze what he says when I don't know his normal behavior patterns?"

"I'll bring you a reference book which outlines some of them."

Mala interrupted. "You say that the heads no longer co-ordinate?"

"That's right."

"Then what if they talk at cross purposes? What if they tell different stories?"

Durr said, "Undoubtedly they will. In that case, Doctor, you and your colleague will have to psychoanalyze him together—One to each head."

"Fantastic," spluttered Dr. Cordier.

"Utterly unprecedented."

"You'll have to do it," insisted Durr. "Government order. Incidentally, I may as well tell you now that we long ago thought of training another bihumanoid as a reserve, and we're doing so, but the training takes at least two years, and meanwhile we badly need Chut-chut."

"But two analysts for the same patient! Such inefficiency! Dr. Clane and I don't have the time to spare."

"You'll make the time. Cancel whatever other appointments are in the way, and send your patients to other analysts. The government will pay for it."

"You don't understand the difficulties that will cause."

MALA smiled to herself and went out. She saw by the signal light at her desk that Dr. Clane was just finishing with a patient of her own, and she waited a moment before switching on the inter-office visor. Dr. Clane, her sharp face in a trance of thought, looked up at her rather blankly. "Yes?"

"I think that Dr. Cordier wants you, Dr. Clane. You'd better go in to discuss it personally. It's rather an unusual case."

She could see the eager face brighten. "Unusual in what way?"

"Unusual in every way. It's difficult to describe, Doctor."

She saw Dr. Clane pick herself up with a conscious effort, and move to the soundproof door that separated her from Office A. Mala sighed. That would hold them for a while, she thought. She put on her headset, and turned on the radio.

All right, I'm vulgar, I'm commonplace, I have low artistic standards, she said to herself. But can I help it if I like space operas? Can I help it if there are billions and perhaps hundreds of billions of women like me—and not only women, but female humanoids of all kinds—who cock their ears to their sets and listen breathlessly to the adventures of Kon King, Boy Interne, and Clara Kell, his space-roving fiancee, and to the terrible trials and tribulations of Andromeda Ann and Betelgueuse Betty, and the rest of the unhappy tribe who are always running into accidents and operations over a hundred galaxies? Can I help it if I like Al the Baron of Aldebaran, the Philosopher-Poet of the Parsecs, as he calls himself, who recites soothing verses that drip into the ear like that half-forgotten thing called molasses, so sweet and gooey?

After all, you can learn so many interesting and useful things listening—how the Andromedans pasteurize their vegetables, and how the Capellans prepare Solar Pudding, and how the Antarean wives get along with their peculiar husbands when they aren't eating them, and lots more. And besides, she told herself, I may have had a liberal education, I may be a technical graduate and all that, but who says that I haven't got the right to have a romantic nature like anybody else?

True, Doctors Clane and Cordier have forbidden me to indulge it, but what they don't know won't hurt them. And they certainly won't know. They'll be tied up with their new patient, tied up in knots so tight that they won't entangle themselves for days and weeks. Wonder if he, or it, is talking yet. Wonder what it's telling them. Wonder what Durr's doing, too, whether he's bitting his nails, or being helpful, telling them they have to know about their non-human friend.

Funny, she thought, that he should have made such an impression on me. I'm inclined to think of him as Dear, instead of Durr. Fancy that! He's really quite ordinary, nothing that would stand out in a crowd. Does important research—well, who doesn't, these days? I've seen uglier men and I've seen a lot handsomer, but he looks like the one for me. Shy, though. Who'd have thought it?

The voice of Clara Kell shrilled in dismay as the growl of an Antarean monster reached her, and at that point Mala

turned the radio off. Corny, she admitted. We use the word "monster", but we don't really believe in them any more. That thing next door looks like a monster, but it's really practically human. Must be, to have a guy like Durr as its friend. And the people who come in here look human, but to judge from the stories many of them tell about themselves, they're really monsters inside. Like that fat man. If those space opera writers want their dangers to carry conviction, they'll have to make their monsters more human.

The signal light was flashing, and she went into the office. The two doctors were seated on opposite sides of the patient, each near one of the heads. Dr. Cordier's head, the left, was drooping. Dr. Clane's, the right, was raised, glaring with contempt at the analyst.

DR. CLANE said angrily, "Mala, I want you to prepare a dose of butal. After we use that, perhaps we'll be rid of a few of these inhibitions, and our patient will be able to talk about himself."

"I have nothing to say," spat out the angry patient, in a voice so cultured that Mala was startled to hear it come from the peculiarly shaped dome. It was a voice with what was known, for some reason she never understood, as an Oxford accent.

"Don't say that, Chut," pleaded Durr. "You'll have to co-operate. It's for your own good."

"There is nothing they can do for me. There is only one cure. To send me back to my home in Andromeda Galaxy."

Mala had prepared the butal dose, and Dr. Clane took it from her and sprayed it efficiently into the patient's face. "He's already talking about home," the analyst said, "That's a good sign. I think that once the butal takes effect, we'll have no trouble at all."

"It'll probably affect both heads," said Dr. Cordier. "Hope it doesn't put them to sleep."

The left head smiled wistfully, and said in its cultured tones, "We do not react the same. That is now our trouble. If we did, we would be co-ordinating again, and we might be considered cured. No, if this drug acts as a sedative on me, it will probably have the opposite effect on Righty."

"Righty?" queried Dr. Clane.

Durr hastened to explain. "When one head has occasion to speak about the other, it uses the term Righty or Lefty, as the case may be. An outside individual addresses either head as Chut. The personality as a whole is Chut-chut."

"Very interesting," observed Dr. Cordier.

"Do you still have those visions, Chut?" asked Durr.

"They are gone. I see nothing," said Lefty.

Dr. Clane interrupted. "Please, Mr. Durr, the analysis is about to begin. Your presence is not needed here."

"But it is. Dr. Cordier asked me to stay because there are certain things in Chut's conversation that he feels he will not understand—"

"Very well. In that case you may stay. But please do not interrupt again."

The dear takes offense easily, thought Mala. Face just a little pink, but she could see that he didn't like Clane's snooty tone. He doesn't know that she's snooty to everybody, even to herself. He needs somebody to protect him from the cruel world. Someone like me, someone who's been hanging around neurotic patients and neurotic doctors long enough to become immune to them.

Any reason why I shouldn't stay and keep an eye on him? she asked herself. None that I can think of. I'll stay then, unless Clane and Cordier think of a reason for kicking me out. I'll stay and listen to the show. It ought to be good, when those two heads really start talking. Better than a space opera. Now I'm going to learn what a monster really thinks about.

The butal had taken effect on the left head. It opened its mouth and said dreamily, "Troy. Troy-trim. Troy-trim

tungal mzharn."

"What was that?" demanded Dr. Clane sharply.

Nobody said anything.

She turned to Durr. "Can't you answer a civil question?"

"After you just told me to shut up? I didn't know that the question was civil. But I'll answer it anyway. He's speaking his native language. His inhibitions are mostly gone, and that's what he prefers to talk."

"Well, I can't understand him. Tell him to speak English."

"Chut," said Durr. "Chut."

"Dem?"

"Speak English, Chut. English. Say what you want to, but talk English."

"English is ugly. My native language is beautiful."

"Go on," said Dr. Clane.

"I come from the Sun Gromin, the Planet Quelt. They are the most beautiful sun and planet in the Andromeda Galaxy. But I shall never see them again. I do not deserve to see them. I left them to go to faraway places, and never again shall I see their beauty.

"Who has seen the like of Gromin and its fair twin, the White Dwarf? Where is there a match for the little twin sun that outweighs Betelgueuse? Who has seen a planet like Quelt, with its beautiful red planets, and its graceful animals? There are none like unto them. To desert them is to die; to travel to other worlds is to forego the true life. I shall never cleanse myself of this sin."

"The thing has a sense of poetry," thought Mala. "Oxford accent or not, it sounds sincere."

"Strong sense of guilt," muttered Dr. Clane.

"I have forsaken those who reared and loved me, all those close and dear—even my own twin, Chut the Right, my mirror self, is now alien to me. Yes, I am alone in the universe. Suns stretch away for hundreds of millions of light-years, but there is no one in all this space that is close to me. No one at all. I am alone."

The other head snorted suddenly, "Chem! Chem Troy!"

Dr. Cordier had been waiting expectantly for his head to speak. Now he wheezed excitedly, "Speak English, please, speak English!"

"Troy! Troy trop! That is what I think of your English. Funfol Troy! The blow is about to strike, and you tell me to speak English. The blow, the deadly blow that will mean annihilation for me and my kind, that will burst unexpectedly, from nowhere, from dimensions that do not exist, that have never existed and never can exist, this will then the end and finish be, completion. Final it will be. Final it must be. It will be final. It will be the end. The end will be final. The end is final is the end is final is the end."

"Steinism," muttered Dr. Cordier.

ONLY Mala's training as a nurse kept her from asking what a Steinism was. Dr. Clane had no such inhibitions, and said openly, and rather sharply, "What was that?"

"Steinism, an ancient form of tautology first employed by the Writer Mrude or Grude or Krude, or something like that Stein. Accompanies a strong feeling of anxiety. *Hmmm.*"

"The danger gathers. It is dread, it is so dread that no mind can imagine it. It surrounds like a fog, a mist, a nebula. It surrounds and coalesces, and then swirls again into mist. There is no escaping it. It is danger. Danger is peril is danger is peril is danger."

The head was still going strong on danger is peril when the other head came to life again. "Kill me!" it shouted. "I shall reveal nothing. I had rather die than reveal what will harm my mother planet. Oh, Mother Quelt, never shall I betray you. Never, Mother, never. They may torture me to their heart's content—"

"Strong sense of guilt," muttered Dr. Clane again. "*And* definite indications of an Oedipus complex."

"No killing," continued the guilty

head. "No killing. Oh, Mother Quelt, there has been enough of killing and talk of killing. We have done wrong to leave you. We shall never leave you again. We shall escape the danger is peril. In your sheltering arms we shall be safe. Nowhere else but in the bosom of Mother Quelt is there safety from peril and danger."

Something in the tone of the last words seemed to excite its companion. Quite unexpectedly, the left head shouted, "Liar!"

"No killing. Only in the bosom of Mother Quelt—"

"Liar! *Liar!* LIAR!

Then suddenly both heads were shouting at once, and a moment after, Chut-chut was in convulsions again. Durr and the two doctors threw themselves upon the creature, and succeeded in subduing it. When it finally fell back into its seat, it lay there in dull apathy. This time both heads down in an attitude of exhaustion.

"That's as far as we can go today," said Dr. Cordier. "Bring Chut-chut back again tomorrow at the same time."

"I'll do that, Doctor. Do you think there's any hope for him?"

"Very definite hope," broke in Dr. Clane, her eyes gleaming. "It is not always possible, of course, to determine in advance the prospects of what a layman would call, 'cure.' But where the patient shows a desire to co-operate, I should say that there is hope. And in spite of all difficulties, this patient *does* show such a desire."

"I hope we get results fast," said Durr. "Thanks a lot. And I'll be in tomorrow with that physiology textbook."

But they weren't, as Mala could see, listening to him. As he helped Chut-chut through the door, Dr. Clane turned to her plump colleague, and said, "This is going to be a most remarkable opportunity, Doctor. An opportunity and a challenge."

"A rather difficult one to face."

"I grant you the difficulties. But a pattern is already emerging. There is a definite feeling of guilt in the left head."

"And a feeling of anxiety in the right one."

"Yes, and the remarkable thing is that the feelings were not far beneath the surface. Ordinarily, it requires a considerable period of deep therapy before they are brought so clearly to the point of expression."

Dr. Cordier pondered. He said, "I thought I heard you express the conjecture that there was a definite Oedipus complex."

"I'm certain of it."

"But so far we have no indications of the attitude toward the father."

"That is a secondary matter. More important is the fact that fervent expressions of attachment to the mother planet indicate a strong desire to return to the womb."

"Yes, I think that is indicated," agreed Dr. Cordier. "In both heads. And I believe that there were also definite indications of considerable damage to the Unconscious resulting from the trauma of birth. This is to be expected in a creature with two heads, and it is represented symbolically, of course, by the sense of guilt about separation from the mother planet."

"True, even the ancient analysts of Earth, headed by a certain Wumreich or Wim Reich, noted the symbolic identification of Mother Earth with the physiological mother. And I believe that the most primitive religions did worship an Earth Mother."

THEY would have gone on for the rest of the day, but Mala had heard that sort of thing before. She left them together, and returned to her own desk, where she filed away the records of the sessions of analysis. After that there was nothing else to do but take care of ordinary patients, and dream of tomorrow, when Frank Durr would be coming in again with his friend.

It would be nice if he were as aggressive as, say, the fat man who had

annoyed her earlier. Even if he weren't, however, he wouldn't get away from her. Not when she had his name and address down in that little appointment book. She wondered what sort of planet and sun he came from originally.

The next day, when he did arrive, she knew that she had made an impression. Not from anything he told her, of course, but from the way he was dressed. He seemed neater, more polished. A man would have noticed exactly what he had done to himself, but Mala was pleased to see the general effect. He had taken special pains for her, for her and no one else. He really was a dear, she thought.

This time the patient seemed too depressed from the start to make any trouble, and was hurried right into one of the offices. Mala was told to have several drugs ready, just in case of emergency, but there turned out to be no need for them. Both heads started talking at once, and all the doctors had to do was start the recorders going and listen. There was hardly time for them to interrupt and get an interpretation in edgewise.

The general line of revelation seemed to be in accord with what had been disclosed in the first session. The left head was mostly obsessed with guilt, the right head with anxiety. Judging from references to their Mother Planet and their Mother Sun, both heads seemed to be suffering from major Oedipus complexes.

Dr. Cordier, Mala noted, seemed to have got over his previous reluctance to take the case. Now he seemed to be gloating over the wealth of material that was being displayed before him. Probably all set to write an article about it for the Psychoanalytic Journal of the Galactic Society, thought Mala.

After talking for about half an hour, both heads seemed to have had enough. The left head quieted down first, and then the right head said, "Destruction, total destruction," and also fell silent.

Dr. Cordier cleared his throat, and addressed Frank Durr. "The background is becoming clearer," he said. "Meanwhile, I imagine that the therapeutic effect of the outpouring of repressed feelings must be considerable."

"He did say, Doctor, that he felt a little better yesterday."

"Exactly," agreed Dr. Clane. She said, "It is not customary for us to discuss a case with any one but the patient himself, or of course, with professional colleagues. However, the circumstances of this case are so unusual—we know so little about the normal behavior of the patient—that I feel it necessary, for once, to make an exception. It is evident that the patient has a deep-seated neurosis of long standing."

"Well, Chut-chut does seem to worry a lot now. But I never noticed it before."

"It's been there beneath the surface all along. Now, Dr. Cordier and I agree that there is an Oedipus complex—an extraordinarily strong feeling of attachment to the mother, complicated by the trauma, or shock, of birth, and a desire to return to the womb."

Durr said uncomfortably, "Well, I wouldn't say that. Chut-chut never knew his mother."

"What's that?"

"He and his kind feel that their planet is their mother. You see, he looks so human, except for those two heads, that most people don't realize he isn't born like us at all. He comes from an egg. His kind are born in an ovarium, thousands of them together. They don't know their mothers or fathers. At a certain stage they break a very thin shell and step out into a heated room. So there isn't any shock of birth, either."

The two analysts stared at each other. "Why didn't you tell us this earlier?" demanded Dr. Clane.

"You didn't ask me. And I didn't think it was important."

"Not important! It's tremendously important."

"But it's all here in this physiology textbook I brought along," he protested.

"This complicates matters," observed

Dr. Cordier. "It would seem that we haven't touched the core of the neurosis after all. In view of what you have just told us, I'm still inclined to think that the etiology is sexual, but without falling into the usual human patterns."

"I don't know, Doctor. Chut-chut is my friend, and I call him 'he,' but strictly speaking his kind don't have any sex until they're about a hundred years old, when they're fed a special food. And he's only about forty now. So I don't know."

Mala noticed that he had flushed at using the word "sex." What a really shy person, she thought. But a darling nonetheless.

DOCTORS CORDIER and Clane didn't think so. The former seemed to bristle. "No mother, no birth shock, no sex," he said. "How *are* we supposed to analyze him?"

"I don't know," said Durr. "But he does seem better since you started treating him. And that's all I care about. Both for the sake of the job, and for personal reasons. I mean, I like him. So I think there's nothing else to do but keep on and let him talk things out."

He'll do anything for a friend, thought Mala with pride, even a monster friend. He's the sweetest person I ever met.

Again the two analysts didn't think so. The only thing they could appreciate, she realized, was that they had been given the toughest problem any analyst could be called on to face. They didn't like it, and they didn't like the man who had brought it to them.

Nevertheless, they did their best. During the following analyses, for no reason that Mala could figure out, Chut-chut continued to improve. They hadn't the slightest idea of what was wrong with him, but that didn't stop him from responding to treatment. He spoke more readily, and was less liable to become excited. After the fourth visit, Mala no longer had to stand in readiness with her supply of drugs. She simply waited outside, her earphones tuned in to one of her favorite programs, while the records faithfully preserved the babblings of the two heads.

After a time the analysts felt that even if they didn't understand him, they knew their patient well enough to dispense with the presence of Frank Durr. That was the time that Mala liked best of all. Frank would come outside into her office, and sit there, looking shyly at her while Mala did all she could to get him into a conversation. He was coming along nicely, she thought. You couldn't change a man's character overnight, but he was certainly less shy than he had been at the start. Far less shy.

But he made it clear to her that he didn't like the way his friend was being treated. "Not fast enough. He still can't work."

"Well, analyses don't perform miracles, you know. It takes time."

"How long?"

"In a favorable case, you might get results in half a year."

He was horrified. "It takes as long as that?"

"As I say, in a favorable case. I don't know whether Chut-chut's would fall into that category. You know, Frank—do you mind if I call you, 'Frank'?"

"Not at all," he said, blushing faintly.

"I've been reading that physiology text you brought along. I think the doctors ought to read it too. Chut-chut's race is really fascinating. Do you know that when they're first born—first come out of the egg, that is, they have only one head, two arms, and no legs?"

"Yes, I read that."

"And then they moult three times, acquiring new arms, and legs, and finally, two heads. That must be a wonderful experience."

"It's normal for them. I suppose they take it in their stride."

"Yes, I suppose so. Still, it must be a shock to have their senses changing. In their second molting stage they have an ultraviolet sense, which they lose entirely in the third. In the third stage, they can see by infra-red, but that doesn't last either. And in all three of these

stages, they have what they call a distant tactile sense—they sort of feel things at a distance by means of vibrations that are emitted by special antennae and echoed from the objects they try to feel. It's a pity that they have to lose such a beautiful sense when they get their two heads."

"They don't mind. They get other senses to make up."

"It would be nice, though, if they could keep *all* their senses. But let's not talk about Chut-chut. Let's talk about *you*," said Mala directly. "Where were you born?"

"Oh, you're not really interested."

"Of course I'm interested, or I wouldn't ask. Now, don't be shy."

"Well, if you must know, I was born on Earth."

"Earth? I remember hearing the doctors discuss it just the other day. Where in the world—wait a minute, don't tell me. That's one of the planets in the Andromeda system, where your friend comes from."

"No, it isn't. My galaxy is known as the Milky Way, and my sun is a small one you never heard of. It happens, though, to have been the original sun."

What provincial pride! she thought with amusement. Aloud, she said cozily, "Of course I've heard of it. I recall now. Do you think I haven't studied ancient history? Why, it's only a few thousand years back that the human race spread from there through the rest of the universe. First through the original solar system, and then, when they learned about interdimensional travel, through the Milky Way, and so on. And Earth is the place that those ancient characters—Stein and Wimreich, and the rest of them—came from."

"I didn't think you'd remember."

HE LOOKED really surprised. She felt amused. Gosh, do I really look so unintelligent? He'd be shocked, though, if he knew how I like to listen to those silly space operas. But it would do him good to listen himself—of course, to the right ones. Give him an idea of what people can be like.

Chut-chut had been improving slowly and steadily for two weeks when the two analysts held a conference. Mala was glad to see that they had got over their dismay at finding they couldn't analyze in terms of mother or sex, and that each had a theory.

"The anxiety," said Dr. Clane firmly, "is obviously due to an inferiority complex. Far from his native planet, the patient feels ill at ease, conscious of his inferior adaptation to the environment. There was probably an infantile episode involving the visit of a single-headed humanoid type, which brought home his own difference in having two heads. This early trauma has been aggravated by recent comparison wth humanoids having more symmetrical arrangements of arms and legs. In other words, there is a conjunction of a character neurosis and a situational neurosis."

"I admit the complexity of the problem," returned Dr. Cordier with plump caution. "However, from my experience with the right head, I should continue to emphasize the relation of the totality of symptoms to the dynamic of the feeling of guilt. I am therefore inclined to believe that the inferiority complex is not basic. I trace the feeling of guilt to a consciousness of betrayal of racial memories, as described by one Yung, or Jung.

"The patient, hatched from an egg along with others of his kind, has strong racial ties. He feels that he has betrayed these ties by leaving his native planet and his own race to live among aliens. We must bring this feeling of betrayal into the foreground of consciousness."

Dr. Clane considered. "I think that, at the present rate of improvement, the analysis may reach that stage within a year."

A year, thought Mala. Frank would be wild at the thought of it. And that poor Chut-chut, having to go through all this day after day! Well, at least they seemed to have improved him a little.

The next day Frank looked pale. Chut-

chut, she noticed, seemed despondent again. You had to expect a relapse once in a while, she told herself. A pity, though, when all had seemed to be going so well.

Frank said, "I'll see you later, Mala. Right now I want to go in with Chut-chut and talk to the doctors about him."

AFTER having counted on a cozy chat with Frank, this was a disappointment. Nothing you can do about it, though, but put on your headphones and escape from this and the rest of life's misfortunes to the slightly distorted magic of space opera, where love always finds a way. Wonder what Betelgueuse Betty's been doing with herself since yesterday. Wonder what strange perils Pauline Pleiades has been enduring. Wonder what—

There came a terrifying shriek from the inner office, and the the sounds of struggle. Mala dropped her earphones and rushed in to see Frank battling with Chut-chut, while the two analysts watched in anger. Dr. Clane was saying, "He simply will not co-operate. He doesn't *want* to be cured."

Chut-chut was shrieking, "Keep it away from me! I don't want to be blasted! I'm afraid of monsters with three heads! I'm a normal bihumanoid with two heads, and I can't stand the abnormal! I don't want to be scattered into atoms!"

"Anxiety stronger than ever," said Dr. Clane.

"Guilt," reiterated Dr. Cordier.

Something clicked in Mala's own one head. She said, "I think I know what's ailing him. I was reading in that textbook about electromagnetic receptivity—"

"We did not ask for your opinion, Mala," said Dr. Clane crisply. "You will kindly leave the room."

"Sure," said Mala. "But with them. And don't expect any of us back, either. Come, Frank, and bring Chut-chut."

"But—"

"Don't argue with me. Come along. I know what's wrong with him. I've found a cure."

This time it was the two analysts who began to yell, but Mala disregarded them. She grabbed Frank's arm, and he grabbed Chut-chut, and the three of them left in a hurry. "Take me where he lives," said Mala.

"Why?"

"I'll explain when I get there. Hurry up."

Frank had been well trained. He got the idea and hurried. Arriving at Chut-chut's room, a small cubicle containing a single bed with an extra-wide end to accommodate two heads, Mala looked around. "Just as I thought," she said, while Frank looked on, mystified. The bed ran along one side of the room, near a pipe that delivered various beverages as required.

She said to Chut-chut, "This three-headed monster you talk about—is his name Xurl? Does he have eight-pointed claws? Is he impervious to flame and atomic disintegration?"

The right head nodded, and said in wonder, "How do you know?"

"Very simple. You haven't been imagining all these threats, Chut-chut. You've been hearing them, but without knowing you were hearing, in your sleep. I've been hearing them too, but over the earphones."

"They are not hallucinations?"

"No, they're just repeats of the Boy Interne broadcasts, and the three-headed monsters and such are the dangers that Pauline Pleiades has been meeting. You see, along with your other special senses, you have electromagnetic receptivity. That means that you can hear by means of radio waves, without special apparatus."

"But only if there is a strong pick-up."

"There is. This pipe is metal, and acted as an antenna. And it runs along near the bed, near where you lay your right head. That's why the right head was the only one to get these 'hallucinations' as you thought they were, in full strength. Naturally, the co-ordination between

your two heads was destroyed."

"But he improved under treatment!" protested Frank.

"Because for the past couple of weeks the broadcasts have gone in mostly for sweetness and light. But yesterday came the three-headed monster—"

Chut-chut shuddered, both heads speaking in unison, "I was frightened out of my wits."

"Naturally. There you have it. Remove that pipe, or move to a different room, or wear head-insulators, or do any one of a number of different things, and you'll stop hearing those broadcasts, and have no more trouble. In fact, now that I've shown you what's wrong, you can probably go back to work right now."

"Even though you have only one head, I think you are beautiful," said Chut-chut fervently.

Mala smiled. "I think I am too. What do you think, Frank?"

Frank blushed. "I've always thought so."

"Then why didn't you tell me?"

"Well, on Earth the men aren't forward. It was different, they say, a few thousand years ago, but now it is considered bad manners for the man to be too aggressive. Now the man must wait for the woman to make the advances."

"You Earthmen! But I suppose I should have known. Frank, will you marry me?"

"Of course, Mala. I've been waiting for you to ask."

Mala sighed, and clutched him in her arms. You're supposed to be gentle and considerate with them, she thought, but gentleness be damned. He'll have to learn to like me as I am.

Chut-chut had no human sense of delicacy. Instead of turning away, he watched with frank if baffled interest, a happy smile upon each of his two faces.

COSMIC ENCORES

(Continued from page 6)

I've heard of Pinetop Smith (what expert of boogie hasn't?) but never of Grasstop Mines . . . is that anything like Salt Mines or Land Mines or is this a newer type of Mines—maybe like Your Friend and Mines.

I still uphold the theory that there is no absolute insulation against cold, but cloth, in my estimation, would always run a poor second to Old Forester. Just an idea, you understand.

Your fuel line ("There's no fuel like an old fuel") sprung a leak long ago; it was ancient when Sitting Bull first caught sight of a Beautyrest Innerspring Seat Cover. Try again, tho', for someday you are liable to become original. Or something even worse, like an s-f editor. But playing out a quip like that would be worse than concentrated carbohydrates in one's carburetor, or bats in the back seat (unless they be Bewitched, Bothered and Bemildred.)

Your stories were again good, and therefore I am no longer surprised, so calm down and remember your escape velocity; you don't want to overwork your tall assistant. Mainly I want to comment on your cover style, on to which I just caught (okay, then; YOU try avoiding ending the sentence with that preposition!). If I remember keereckly, I once commented that if you eliminated that circle foremat, your mag would appear in the same cover foremat as my own personal favorite for all-time: that of the 1941 and previous ASF. You did it, and I'm glad! In my opinion, those pre-war ASF had the most striking foremat of any mag I have ever seen; if ONLY you would trim your edges . . . is it still asking too much? Nevertheless, I want to give you the deserved round of applause. I am really happy you did that. Trade SS's trimmed edges for FSM now; I won't kick at all. And with a Schomburg cover illo, yet! More than I would've expected.

Well, I'll (wipe off that grin, dammit) go now, but leaving you for once without the standard, "Sam, what happened? This issue was *good!*" It was, though; but this time I ain't surprised.—*410 Kensington Rd., Baltimore 29, Md.*

Insults will get you no further than flattery, especially when the insults are no more original than my original gags. So they are trying to charge you $200 more to go back and be studied at Harvard? Don't do it, kid, it ain't worth it. How much can they find? Besides, winter is coming and if you intend to insulate yourself solely in an aroma of Old Forester, someone will be around to chip your frozen carcass out of a Massachusetts snow drift. And we hate to lose subscribers.

PROPOSITIONS, PROPOSITIONS
by Richard Lupoff

Dear Uranium Mines: Just obtained a copy of the September FSM, and boy, you're really doing

a job on that magazine. This may sound like heresy but as far as I'm concerned, it's the best of the Fabulous Four (Maybe I should say five, but the annual is just like a seventh issue of FSM). Really, Sam, the stories you've been using lately are great. I don't dare single out any specifically for fear of snubbing the rest.

However, since there seems to be some controversy, mark me down with a thunderous *yex* (yex? I must have meant yes) for some more Pete Manx stories. And also let me say that DEVILS FROM DARKONIA was *not* fantasy. Some people are so anthropocentric, or in a broader sense, terracentric, that they can't imagine life evolving along different lines than it has here. Suppose life on another platen (this machine must have been drinking) . . . on another planet had evolved along completely different lines from that on Earth. In all the vastness of the universe there is certainly room for anything to happen.

What Cal Beck says about using older stories seems to have some merit, but so does the other side. Most of the more recent stories are better-written than the relics of the early 30's, yet what happens when you start using stories so new that a large percentage of your readers caught them the first time around? I would recommend a compromise: Continue to select most of your stories on the basis of quality, regardless (within reason) of age, but select at least one *real* oldie per issue, for its novelty value if nothing more.

Note to Nick The Greek and other suffering collectors: Drop a line to the F&SF Book Co., 204 Rice Ave., Staten Island, N.Y. I have no connection whatsoever with them, except as a past (and very pleased) customer, so I can't make any promises, but from my own experience, I'd say that there's at least a 50-50 chance you'll get what you want, and for a reasonable amount, too.

When I started reading stf about four years ago, a lot of it seemed oddly familiar, particularly the art and some of the space-opera type story. I finally realized that it was the result of almost-forgotten memories of some old, old comic books Standard used to publish. Startling, Wonder, Thrilling, Strange, and I think Captain Future. I've tried to get a few copies, and met with a notable lack of success. If any reader knows where I can get some, I'd be willing to pay a fair price, just for old times sake.

As for reviving the SF Hall of Fame, may I submit that FSM *is* the Hall of Fame, greatly enlarged, and no longer in SS as it used to be.

And the reason that most of the reprints in FSM are from TWS rather than STARTLING, is that STARTLING was founded to present complete novels as a companion to TWS which featured shorter lengths. Hence SS usually had room for only one or two shorts.

The very first issue of STARTLING, for instance, contained THE BLACK FLAME, which nearly filled the whole book. I've been wondering for months now how you fitted TBF *and* DAWN OF FLAME *and* a couple of short stories into one issue of FSM.

And at last, (you might have known) CAPTAIN FUTURE. I won't bother to beg or reason with you, that's been done many times, by many people, and the universal reply has been "NO!" So I'll make you a business proposition. I will guarantee sale of $2.50 worth of a CF softcover anthology. That means that if it sells for 25c I'll buy ten copies; if it's 35c I'll buy eight; if it's a half-dollar I'll buy five; if it's a dollar I'll buy three. Print this letter and ask how many other readers will guarantee to buy one or more copies and you'll probably get enough almost to make it worthwhile that way. I said I wan't going to plead, but Sam, puh lease, at least try out my idea. If the response is insufficient to make it worthwhile, you'll have real ammunition to shoot back at such pests as me and Hank Riverbridges. If it is sufficient (which I'm sure it will be) you'll be able to publish the thing and forget it. The reason I'm so sure is that other than the normal sale of such a publication, a lot of *non*-collecting readers would buy it for a novelty (there, I've spelled it both ways) and every collector would be quick to grab at least one copy, probably more.

A few final notes:

Cover: you've got a good design at last, and unusually good pics of late, but now that you've got the title and contents up top and off the picture at last, why not get the month, price, and "A Thrilling Pub" up there too. You've gone 95% of the way to a great cover format, howzabout finishing it.

Edges: Face it, Sam, it's inevitable. Lowndes and his three mags have deserted the field, leaving only FFM and PS-TCSAB to share rough edges with you. And even with you, it's worked on WSA and SS, why not complete it by trimming FSM, SpS, and TWS.

Features: Sam, pleasepleaseplease restore fanzine reviews. I don't know what you have against them. They don't take up much room. They needn't cost anything (unless you drop ads to make room, but you could surely print a page or two less of fiction or even letters [heresy again]) because if you don't want anybody getting paid to write them, I can name at least 100 fans who'd be overjoyed to do them for you gratis. Number one on the list is Dick Lupoff, if you want a frinstance—*10100 W. Broadview Dr., Bay Harbor Island, Florida.*

We could keep quite a staff busy just filling your requests, no? Your financial proposition doesn't tempt us. For $2.50 we should print two and a half million dollars worth of Cap Future magazines, huh? And who will make up the other $2,499,997.50? Better get in touch with Hank Riverbridges. Seems to me he was threatening to publish his own magazine last time he paddled in here.

A LACK OF HARMONY
by Jim Harmon

Dear Sam: You must be laughing out of the other side of your typewriter, by now, about that editorial in the July FANTASTIC STORY. (Yes, I'm back. Where have *I* been? Where have *you* been? The gold standard has been tottering in the months-long absence of Minesines—economic recession loomed.) Yes, by now, you've seen that just because chlorophyll is useless to humans, that doesn't effect its sales. Why, even where the government makes the manufacturer say it's worthless, the product goes right ahead selling—maybe because so few people know the meaning of

the word "thairaputic"—stupid, stupid typewriter; it doesn't even know how to spell it.

I guess the continuance of the little green boom is due to something I long ago realized—if something becomes deeply enough ingrained in our culture, it won't ever completely disappear as long as the culture lasts. Take detective stories, for example. They hit bottom a time back—went down to a half-dozen fiction magazines a month, not many books, movies, teleplays. But they were so deeply ingrained they hung on until Spillane's sadistic pornography became confused in the public mind with mystery stories, and the resurgence began.

And the reawakening of interest in mystery fiction, combined with the science-fiction trend, has caused something that contradicts what I finally came around to believing. The day of the pulp *per se* is NOT over. They, too, are apparently too deeply ingrained to disappear.

I remember a little conversation we had once—I was talking about pulp formats and you were talking about pulp editorial policies.

Eyes on the distant horizon, jaw squared, you announced: "The pulps are due to become something fine, something great, something *different.*"

Just happened to think—you really get service as a letterhack for LIFE. I dropped them a note—200 words—and an assistant editor wrote me a longer reply and told me he would keep me informed on plans they had to publish it. Keep me informed on the conferences you have deciding whether to publish this, eh, Sam. (Not being smugly confident—just imagine the decision between waste-basket and drawer will come pretty quick.)

I suppose you know that FSM is the best reprint magazine around—except the annual.

It's my opinion, tempered by nostalgia, that the best stf magazine of all was the old fifteen-cent SS. It had quite a lot of what I like—Kuttner novels, Bradbury shorts, good reprints (better quality because of low quantity, i.e., high selectivity), Bergey babe covers (I drooled down my childish chin), Finlay illos, long humorous letter and fanzine columns, low price, and all in that delightful, disappearing "*they* think we're crazy" attitude. I'd like to see reprints or re-reprints from that period.

I liked the pictures this time. You know, Abbott really does look like a handsome space hero. But must this Poulton keep tossing dice, flowers, butterflies, old shoes in front of the main points of the female figure?

Speaking of your editorials, like I was at first, I thought that one about the helpless invalid and his gadgets was one of the most important ones, I've ever read in science-fiction. Machines aren't to be feared or worshipped, just respected—they *are* the way Man will reach the stars. You know, indoor plumbing has done more to add to human dignity than all the philosophers in the world.

Well, as far as my draft board is concerned, I'll see you at Philly for the convention. At my request, they have arranged to clear that time for me. Now, if you just get your Civil War pension. Don't take any more Confederate dollars, Sam.—*427 East 5th St., Mt. Carmel, Ill.*

You mean that ole draft board is still breathing down your neck, Jim? I thought you told me they found no heartbeat and sent you home. Fandom could ill afford to lose you. Fandom could ill afford.

THE VOICE OF EXPERIENCE
by Val Walker

I have before me 1/5 of the famous thrilling group, all edited by the famous Sam Mines, which is a hell of a way to be the most read editor in science-fiction

The 1/5 happens to be Fantastic Story for July which arrived in Tulsa in late May.

Which brings me to-Philip K. Dick. Whoishe? Been doing pretty well for himself as of lately.

Sam they are slighting you, putting your name last on the list way back behind publisher man. ed. and even el art director. Don't let yourself be run over Sam, assert yourself. Go up to Ned and say "Now look hear N.L., this has got to stop." Do that Sam, I'll bet you'll get some action that way.

Now to C. E. Wouldn't it be perfectly horrible if poor Henry didn't get his letter to you in time?

Note to Joe Keogh—you said your argument was perfectly logical and would show what would happen if space travel doesn't. I don't. See what will happen, all you said is that it would be a joke-true. So are you afraid everyone's going to laugh themselves to death.

Does Gregg Calkins head his own letter?—Do you? If so please head them otherwise.

Wow! What an article—on chlorophyll—what a startling disclosure, probably had to write that under police protection.

An idea, really terrific—why not get a story by Walt Kelly—U No thet guy what writes Pogo. Well why not. Or maybe a one box Pogo cartoon.—*6438 E. 4th Pl. Tulsa, Okla*

Stop trying to sneak Pogo into FSM and SS by the back door. In the first place we can't afford him now that he is rich and famous. In the second place the pocket-philosopher of Okefenokee doesn't quite figure as a science-fiction character, despite the vast loyalty he seems to inspire in science-fiction fans. And speaking of fans—there are *real* science-fiction characters!

ROUND TRIP
by Carol McKinney

Dear Sam: WHAT have you done? What HAVE you done??? ISLAND IN THE SKY was actually a classic as stated! As good or even better than a lot of the crud forced on us in the name of science *fiction!* The Sept. FSM was in top form all the way, in fact.

Now, who is this R. W. Stockheker who so ingeniously came up with GADGET BAGHDAD, one of the new stories? You don't run across stories like that every day. The writing style was superb, and the applied knowledge of things little known behind the 21" screen makes this story one of the most outstanding of its kind this year. Do

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Preface and Notes by Samuel Mines
Jacket by Alex Schomburg

you dare tell us, Sam? Is he—

1. A name behind which lurks a well known stf author (who didn't happen to want his own in FSM)? or—
2. A brand-new author, meteorically rising?

Well? If it's the first, do we learn what his name *is!?!?*

HYPERPILOSITY was a curious little tale. Enjoyed it again, even though I'd already read it somewhere once before.

Incidentally, tell Pat I enjoyed her little review on the stf thriller, It Came From Outer Space. Do we get more of the same kind again, I hope?

Heard a sombre little rumor the other day, Sam. Seems the official organ of the space opera took a sudden nose dive. Space Stories folded??? But, *why?!?* Things are getting grimmer and grimmer, also dimmer. The world will end when SS and TWS show their proudly stubborn formats for the last time.—*385 No. 8th East St., Provo, Utah.*

The usually ebullient Carol displays an unseemly mood of pessimism, it appears. Things can't be that bad. We hope. True, you won't be seeing SPS around, but leave us hope you can survive this bitter blow. Stockheker is no pseudonym of a well-known author. He is a lad with a very wicked sense of humor who occasionally—far too occasionally—sends us a story. When he does, we print it and hope for more. He's not prolific—at least in our field—but maybe that'll change.

PURPLE GROTTO
by Fredrick B. Christoff

Dear (Hmmm?) Sam: Say! It didn't take you long to read those other 9,999 letters did it? Anyway here's the letter you have been looking for. Come on, Sam, put your head back on and pay attention here!

That cover on the Sept. ish was magnificent, stupendous, colossal, a masterpiece of perfection, it was also pretty good. It had something in it for all fen. For the saucer fans it had saucers. For the world wrecking fan it had a wrecked world. For the fem fan it had two beautiful and shapely dames. For the Aliens it had four good looking men, that alone should keep the female things quiet for awhile. You have proven that you receive good covers so why don't you use them more often or do you only use the lousy ones to make us appreciate the good ones all the more?

ISLAND IN THE SKY. Yike, a rip-roaring space opera. "Watch it Airmen Blackies loose again, four hundred bucks for a breakfast, yah I worked in the pit too, revolution and power hungry villians, imagine that he done killed a man, a gorilla, a bunch of pigs and an elephant all with his little sword, beware the Jabberwock my son". All I can say is a lot of space wasted for nothing but an enjoyable story. Hmmmm?

The new stories were all good with LIBERATION taking top honors over all the rest. However it was a nicely rounded out ish and every story was well received even the one by that horrible SdeC. I guess I must have been in a good

mood when I read them. You! you're never in a good mood.

The Finlays as usual were magnificent. The Orbans as usual were lousy. The Poultons were good the rest knew better than to put a signature on the messes.

So you climb mountains for a past time? Boy you're some tough egg. To climb mountains takes muskels, so I guess I had better behave? Seeing that I don't dare fight with you no more I guess I'll have to pick on some poor dope in Ce.

Burton K. Beerman . . . Crawl back in your hole boy, I was here first and I don't like threats to my position as screwball supreme.

Carol McKinney. . . . Whatzamatter with you? By now you should know that Sam picks the stories for publication by the system of "One patatoe Two patatoes three patatoes four." But you did offer a good suggestion. How about that Sam? I nominate EARTH'S LAST CITADEL by the Kuttners.

Mr. Beck . . . Your suggestions are akin to having all the prozines going weekly.

Dick Clarkson. . . . Don't pay so much attention to Sam, you're beginning to sound like him. Sure you would pay a buck for FSM and Sam's just the guy to let you do it.

Joe Keogh . You and I must get together. As you know Sam only allows one Canadian fan letter to appear each ish. So I suggest we take turns and you might get around to answering my letter.

Bill Shirley . . Again I must ask "Whatzamatter with you? "The only way to unnerstand TT stories is not to read them. Yuk Yuk!—*39 Cameron St. S., Kitchener, Ont.*

Don't strain, boy, nobody's challenging your position of screwball supreme. We propose to retire to a mountain top and thus get above the level of some of these conversations. Seems like the only way sometimes.

GRAND LARCENY
by Joe Keogh

Salutations, Sam: Up until about three minutes ago, I was going to start this out wildly praising and bolstering a few editorial ideas of your'n. Anyway I still am, so don't be disheartened.

But I feel the prime necessity that rates first mention—from self-defense at least, if not from criticism—(which I would *never* dream of doing) is that which emoted from yon editorial pen re PI IN THE SKY.

Being the privilege-enjoying blue-pencilling (*"only it's red"*) sharp-witted editor of among other mags, FSM, Sam, your omnipotence has gone to your headbone; that is, the subconscious part of it at least. I don't know where one of my recent letters was addressed, be it TWS or SpS, but I can safely say you read it (by special thought-translator or no).

Come to think of it, by the time this is printed, the issue with my letter in it will already have gone out, and smiling tight-lipped though pa-

[*Turn page*]

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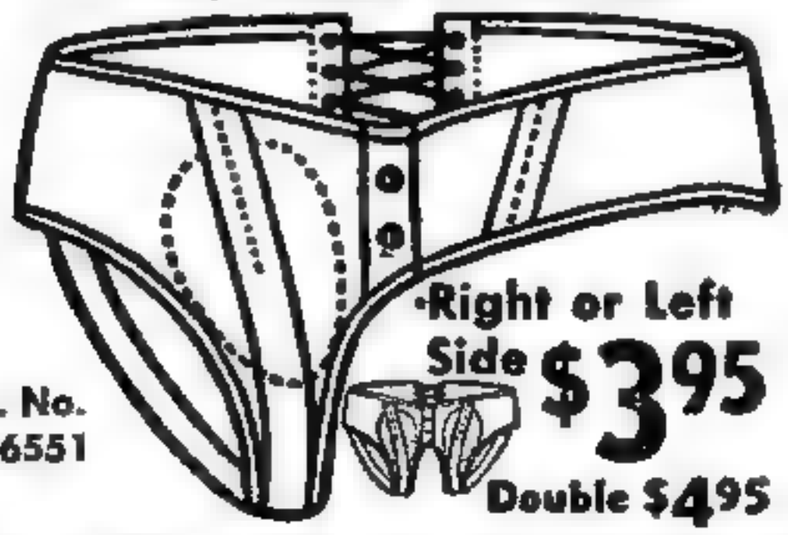

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tronizing fen will grimace and say, "Yes, we know Joe stole this line from the Mines editorial of July FSM." Such was not the case!

It was definitely the other way around, Sam; for unbelievable as it may be, I was gayly tripping my way through a Mines editorial when Lo! And Behold! a *Keogh witticism* met my gaze. Stupefied for the moment, I remembered I had previously emoted it, but knew it was imprisoned in some future not-yet-on-sale SpS; I had almost reached the conclusion of great minds run in the same channels but Sam has struck a reef, when cogs and transistors synchronized themselves in the Keogh head; and I realized that though this letter has yet to be printed (logic: anything that sticks that much in Sam's mind must be worthwhile), you have and must have read it, sent it rapidly away to Kokomo, and then fiendishly composed that plagiarized phrase in yon editorial under the egotistical impression that it was further product of the great you!

Of course I'm talking about the phrase, "closer to the Marx brothers than Karl of the same name." Couldn't you have given me just a wee by-line or credit-line? . . . but I am not complaining (at least it gave me a good excuse for writing another extra page). So recant, monster! Bow down and submit your admit. Sure this is all in fun, Sam. Hah, hah. Don't pay any attention to that gnurl-gnife I have at your back. Grrr.

That is over. I have undisputed testimony from Dr. Haphwitt to prove it, much more reliable than Nudnick, who I hear is now doing a ten month stretch on Pluto for counterfeiting priceless old 1957 copies of FSM. Easy? He hasn't found out yet that Pluto's months are a meager five years long!

But this letter is because I want to commend you on your decision to cut out the old-type circle cover. It took courage and guts, Sam! (Hah! You safe and sound in that bullet-proof editorial office!)

It *was* too hard to suit the picture to the format. Better to suit the format to the picure. Ever thought of that? But it did show FSM wasn't afraid of being radical (And how further radical could you have gotten?)

Your point was well-made on pictures *with* a story, not pictures *for* a story. I am sold, and any other quarter-brained fan should be, too.

Like the one that was on this FSM. I am still wondering if it hadn't been designed partly for the old style motif; with that circular clock-face they were standing on.. I had just taken an FSM from the stands, and never did suspect the new move (although I thought there was something different) until I read your revelation.

I thought this particular cover was well-done for Popp and was the first decent cover I've seen him do yet. About here I am going to compare three distinct styles, that of Schomburg, (more specifically his latest cover for FSM, the null-gravity) Emsh and Popp.

All Popp's work is done in vertical, streaky lines of the brush. Sometimes I wonder if he hasn't finished the painting, and then either crumples it fanwise and sideways, or cuts vertical lines across it with a pair of scissors. Then, Schomburg's latest cover actually looked like a comic strip, even his inside illos, because of the clear-cut sharpness: not an admirable trait; and I admit the best cover I've ever seen was a Schomburg.

In my dog-eared book, Emsh comes up with the best paintings firstest with the mostest. His style is in between these other two, which is why I compared them at all. It is fairly clear-cut (which I like) but one of his best has these sharp colors blending in, that of the June SS. So give him the Oscar anytime you're ready.

I was looking at Popp's marvelous cover, and it occurred to me you might compare the two bellicose figures as: smooth, polished and scientific "mature" stf battling old, harsh, outspoken, crude space-opera. Which could win? Logic says the space-suited figure; stf says (always a good twist) the ape-man; I say, *stalemate*— neither can get by that time warp.

As to the effect of these stories on the fen in this July ish, I didn't dislike any one of them. Does that mean some other one will clamor for your dismissal and the breaking over the knee of the proverbial editorial pen? Maybe, but they're crazy.

I rate FSM as building fairly strong and steadily towards a par with TWS and SS. The reason is that with more mature articles and columns in FSM, a longer letter column (which always means something) and a better class of new stories along with the reprints, more and more people have a higher respect for it.

I can guess how many letters there will be seeking to "incarcerate" me in the September issue, for want of anything else to do. I promise to meet all accusations with a double letter and envelope (carbon-copied) but will not guarantee the absence of a well-placed bomb. You're just jealous!

Anyway, thanx for your defence of me, and after what I sometimes say to you, Sam. There must be a catch to it somewhere . . . no I *won't* "come down and replace Bixl."

As I thumbed through the pages of that "litter—" column (my motto is a good line every letter—copyright Mcmlviii) I approximated it to be very and more than usually interesting. So were your pithy comments, and I suspect the sole reason for your printing of Kaufman's letter, Sam, was to get out that corny "DE CAMP FIRE" and "DE CAMP likes it even more."

Of course you know what *corny* means, Sam. "Wish *I* could have thought up "one like that".—*63 Glenridge Ave., St. Catharines, Ont. Canada.*

Defending you only proves how big is our heart and how unself-interested we are. Anyone who considers Haphwitt a more reliable authority than Nudnick is obviously beyond the pale. It was probably Haphwitt, or some of his beer-parlor friends, who spread that foul canard about Nudnick doing a ten-month stretch on Pluto. The true story is that he was invited by Pluto's Minister of Plenipotentiary to come out and make a study of Pluto's orbit since the Plutonians are thinking of moving their planet

[*Turn page*]

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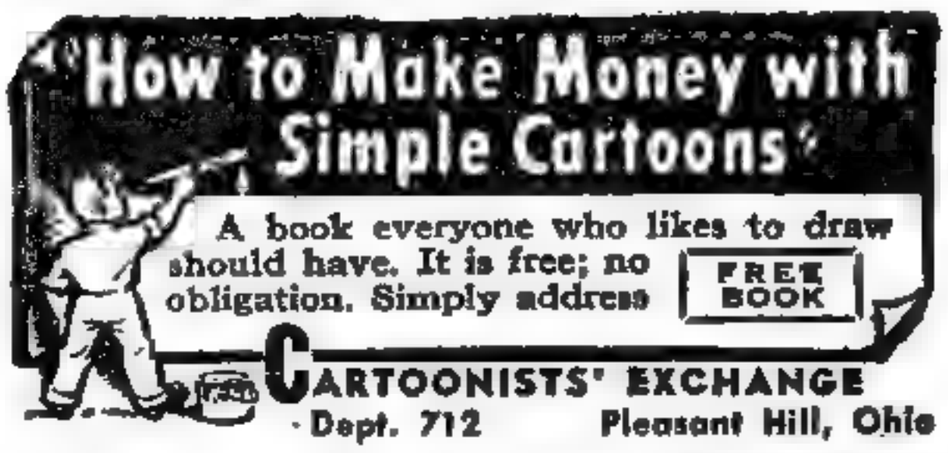
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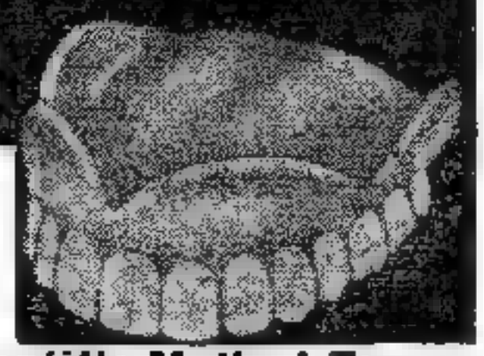

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by Ron Ellik

Dear Samuel: If you can call me Ronald, I can call you Samuel. Wazzat? You say you don't mind being called Samuel? WELL I MIND BEING CALLED RONALD! So there. I dropped the last three letters of my given name some three years ago, and I wish to Ghu they'd stay dropped.

I see I was mistaken about the general conception of the term collector's item. I guess I have a different sort of collection than most people.

I hold my opinion that Jerry Shelton and Larry Clinton are one and the same! Both are musicians, stf writers, and have names that sound so much alike that it's like Emsh and Emsler (by the way, H. L. Gold explained the business of Emsh's pen-names in a 52 Galaxy. I sold my collection of G sometime back, and so I don't know which one it was, but it's there).

John D. Butler: Your parents must be pen-names of mine. They seems to act exactly alike. Only one difference. When I start to bring up stf, my mother just says that she "doesn't wish to discuss it," and that is all there is to it. Can't even get her to say why I let her read THE LADY IS A WITCH, from a 1950 SS, and she really liked it. But her opinions of stf remain the same. Why? Why? Why? (and he was still hollering "Why?" as they carried him off into the night. . .)

Sam, can you tell me, please, where HYPERPELOSITY was printed in a hard-cover edition? I know I didn't read it in the original form (I only been around two or three years!), but I do recall having read it somewhere before. The only thing I can think of is that it was boarded up. Maybe it was in a book that some fan would like to trade for a mint copy of SANDS OF MARS? I have that, and I'd like to get rid of it.

At last Napoli is coming back! He quit illoing for you a while back, didn't he, Sam? Maybe with Merwin gone he is finally getting his courage up enough to send in more stuff. (Sam I probably has a bomb in the mail already. If so, let me say that I am a re-incarnation of Jack Freysling, and that it will do no good.)

Who did the illo for *Hyperpelosity?* And the one on pg. 108? Was that Emsh on pg. 112? Alex was at his best on the cover thish. But do you think that once, just *once* he could do an illo without including those cracks on the ground? I think he got used to doing those in all the Lunar scenes he did, and can't get out of the habit. Sure, it makes the Earth look dead and all that, but I'm getting so that I know every crack he makes before he makes it, BY NAME!—*232 Santa Ana, Long Beach 3, California.*

HYPERPILOSITY was once hard-covered in a de Camp collection put out by Shasta and called THE WHEELS OF IF. Dunno if it is in print—I think not. It was Poulton who did

the illustration for it in the September FSM. Make you happy?

Ah, mail, mail. Daryl Sharp wandered into the office the other day and we talked about things, and after he'd left I discovered a letter from him. Lives up at 100 Alice St., Eastview, Ont., Canada. Letter didn't have anything important to say except that HYPERPILOSITY was tripe and he didn't like a certain ad. Arda Kauer, 2007 38th St. E., Minneapolis, Minn., wants more Lawrence illustrations. We had 'em for DAWN OF FLAME and THE BLACK FLAME recently.

Paul Mittelbuscher now A/3c, AF 17376007, 501st A.D. Gp. O'Hare Field, Chicago, Ill. is mad because we didn't seem to know who Conan is, but is happy over the Wellman story and wants more Hamilton. Egad, nothing but demands, demands. James Chamlee (if that's wrong it's your handwriting, chum,) 208 N. 9th St., Gatesville, Texas, writes his first letter asking for fen to write him, if they want to take a chance on the name which may be wrong. David Fitzgerald, 800 W. 32nd St., Baltimore 11, Md., wants more Schomburg, longer stories, fewer ads (mebbe a free Ford with each subscription?).

William Shirey, 4566 Clay St., Fresno, Cal., writes to gripe about the Schomburg cover in September—the same cover some others write to rave about, natch. Ellen Kaplan, 6505 Central Ave., Glendale, 27, N.Y. says de Camp was the only thing that saved the September ish. Why don't you fight with Ron Ellik?

Samuel J. Johnson 505 W. Colonial Ave., Elizabeth City, N.C., wants to know if all Canadians are like Joe Keogh—such magnificent bravado. He is also alarmed at our referring to ourselves in the plural, wants to know how

[*Turn page*]

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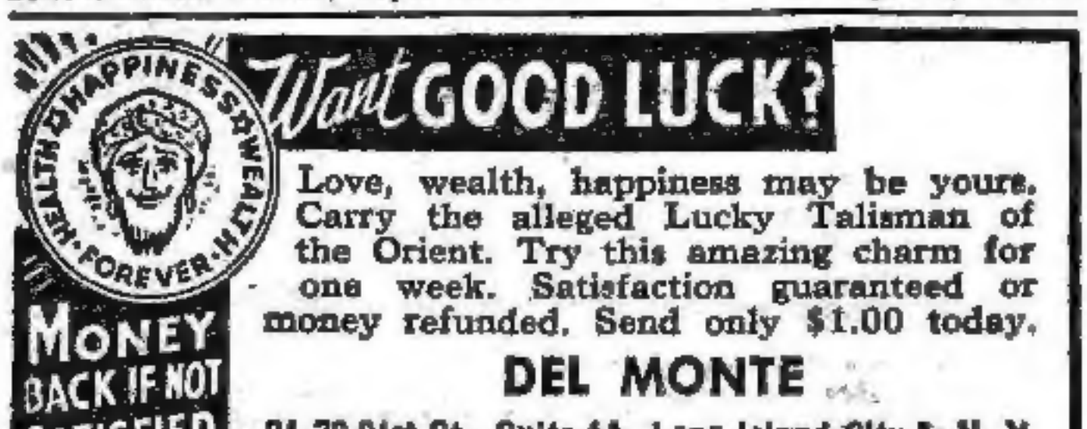
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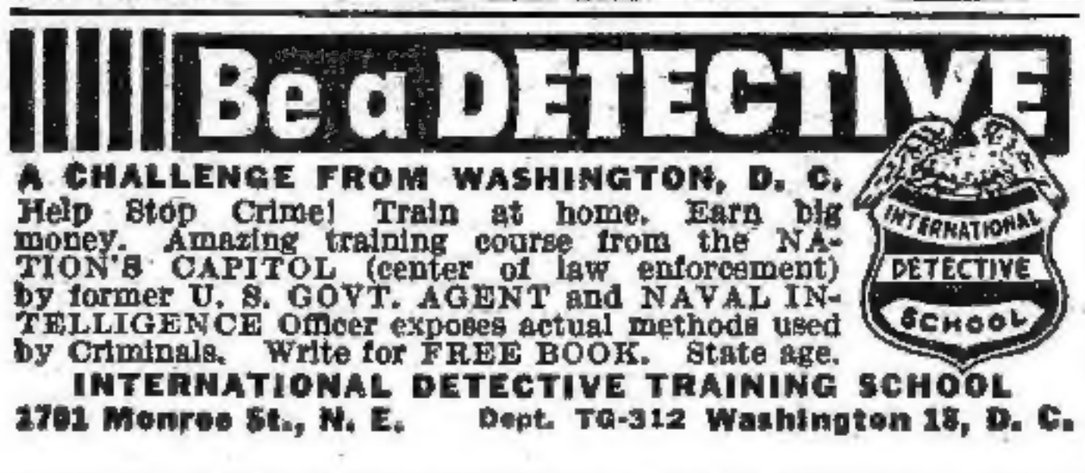
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many bodies we have. Haven't you ever heard of the editorial "we?"

Ned Reece, Rt. 3, Box 68A, Kannapolis, N.C., gets in a plug for the older stories, and Ben Sodek, 1418 S. Marsalis, Dallas, Texas, says THROUGH THE BLACKBOARD and DEVILS FROM DARKONIA are the best stories he's read. Feels sad about chlorophyll being debunked and quotes back at me the line from Hawthorne about change which he suggests means change occurs in men's hearts rather than in outside things. H'mm. Philosophy yet.

John Walston, Vashon, Wash., says we insulted his poetry—gosh, we did? And Robert Kvanbeck 417-17th Ave. North, Minneapolis 11, Minn., sends along this masterpiece: "Why reeks the goat on yonder hill who seems to dote on Chlorophyll." Maril Shrewsbury, Box 1296, Aransas Pass, Texas, says we're making another Snarly Seibel out of her. Joe Hedges, 17475 S.W. Pilkington Rd., Oswego, Ore., says we are doing okay, even if we are a little commercial. A little? Everett L. Slosman 12-B Atlantic Ave., Pleasantville, N.J., offers a copy of FSM with SLAN in it to the highest bidder. And we're commercial? John R. Phillips, 600 Strathhaven Ave., Swarthmore, Pa., seems pleased with the mag—we actually had some good short stories, he says.

John Truax 1102 9th St., Rapid City, S. Dak., makes us a member of the Exalted Professor's League of America on account of having so many professors in the stories. Tom Bradley, 44 Sherman St., Hartford 5, Conn., wonders why a book house grabbed THE CONDITIONED CAPTAIN before the magazine version had time to cool. And A. B. King, 22717091, 3 B A D R A O C, B A O R, which is the British army's idea of an address, writes from Germany that his copies of FSM have to come by way of South Africa—more fun.

And we'll see you all back here next time. . .

—*The Editor*

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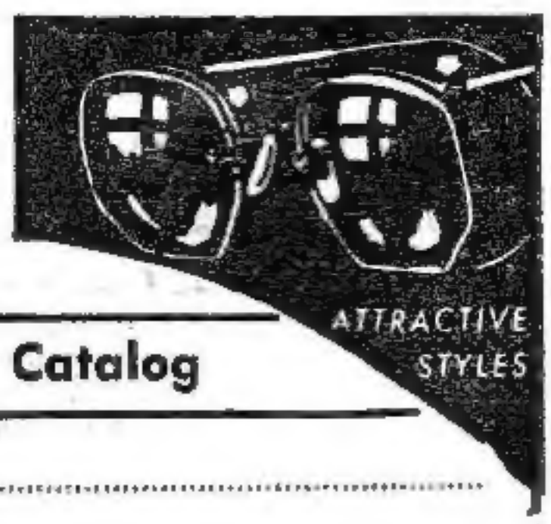

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